

INSIDE

Your quality Australian weekly soccer paper for the new millennium

SOCCER

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NSL CRITERIA: SHOW US THE DETAIL

Dave McPherson



Carlton's Scottish legend on the NSL and Australia. Page 5.

By Aidan Ormond

Soccer Australia should be congratulated for getting the principle right regarding the relaunch of the NSL, to begin in eight months' time.

And with the release of data by the national federation showing an operating profit of 1.5 million for 98/99, plus the hefty LG sponsorship of the national teams, kudos for the Scarsella-led fiscal recovery at Soccer Australia should be given.

However, when it comes to the relaunch of the NSL for 2000/1, there is a huge difference between identifying a worthy principle i.e. that we need to reform a generally moribund league's social and sporting status, and the thinking through of the details - both macro and micro - needed to pull off this grand plan.

And therein lies Inside Soccer's concerns, raised last week by C7 commentator Greg Blake in this paper and addressed this week by Soccer Australia Chairman, Basil Scarsella.

In short, as far as this paper is concerned, the alarm bells are ringing regarding this crucial move to a Premier League (or first division) and a second division.

The gist of our concerns focuses on the details. Clearly the Achilles heel of the whole plan, the actual details, were never fully in place (they still aren't) when voted on by the stakeholders in late December, particularly with a second division. Yet it was voted on in the hope that they would be worked out in time.

The principle has been voted on but not the specific substance. In other words, it's a macro approach without much micro getting in the way of a good idea.

A little like policy on the run.

It's been just over a month since that vote by the stakeholders. It seems that very little work has been done since to put some detail into the plan.

As Scarsella himself says, "there is still plenty of detail to be worked out over the next 12 to 18 months ... particularly with promotion

and relegation. The second division at this point is a lot more fluid than the first." For example, there is no consolidated business plan for the second division.

Further, legal action by clubs against Soccer Australia seems inevitable, with Scarsella only "hoping" it doesn't happen.

So what did the stakeholders actually vote for? A principle is fine but the details are key, surely.

Imagine if, to use a political metaphor, a political party went to an election on a principle (say, on tax), but neglected to fully bed down all the details and accompanying ramifications. The election campaign would be a disaster, as their opponents would exploit their lack of details. No-one would vote for a party on principle alone before finding out what it meant to them and their sphere of influence.

It's exactly the same with Soccer Australia, except we, the football punters, don't get a chance to flesh out the issues through an election campaign.

As they say, the devil's in the detail.

So while a number of ambitious clubs will be looking at the second division as a way of improving on their state league status, it is a leap into the unknown because of the paucity of details (a view backed up privately by a number of clubs.)

Scarsella defended the new NSL criteria by saying it spells out the assessment clearly, and for new franchises the bar will be raised even higher and be "significantly more onerous."

"There are differing criteria for the existing 16 NSL clubs and the clubs aspiring to come in the league. The reason for that is the recognition of the clubs currently in the league and what they have done," said Scarsella.

"New clubs can be admitted this year if they meet the higher level criteria, but not after next year, when they will have to join the second division in the initial instance."

Continued page nine

Plus: The Football Kingz assessed by Greg Blake, Ian Crook, Ask Stergiboy, Aussies Abroad, Brad Levy, NSW Super League, Victorian Premier League preview, plus a day in the life an Aussie Soccer Colt.

Crooky

A seven goal thriller against Parramatta Power was a great advertisement for the game but unfortunately it wasn't such a good advertisement for defending, especially ours from set pieces.

It was so refreshing to see David Seal score two goals and look so very dangerous up front but it tore the heart out of the side every time we conceded a goal from a set piece.

Like most teams we spend time before every game working out who will look after every player on the opposition team, but it just doesn't seem to be working.

So far this season we have conceded at least 15 goals from corners and free kicks. Most of them coming from headers in and around the six-yard box.

Three goals against Adelaide City immediately spring to mind, as does one against Brisbane in round four, another the following week against Sydney Olympic, another winner against Marconi, the next game against Auckland. The list just goes on and on and on.

It has cost us no less than 10 competition points and that would have us sitting nicely inside the top six.

Forget about a lack of goalscoring. It is goals conceded from set-pieces that are killing us and making life very difficult as we hover around the edge of the top six.

Fortunately a few teams in and around the top six also lost last weekend so we are only six points out of the



top six but the time has come for us to string together a heap of wins.

Parramatta has shown how quick you can rocket up the ladder with a string of wins and we have to start our own revival.

That should start against South Melbourne at North Sydney Oval on Friday night.

South Melbourne are a great side but with David Seal back in form and the rest of our attack finally clicking we need only to tighten things up at the back and we can get over the top of any team in the NSL.

While on Seal, it was great to see him score a double against Parramatta. He has worked very hard to regain his fitness and he looked very sharp on Saturday night.

He is getting into the right positions, making a lot of good runs and he is now hitting the back of the net when he gets a chance.

Ian Crook
Northern Spirit and Engalnd

S-news

Inside Soccer's
Australian news
and goss

BLATIS' LATE INCLUSION

Tony Popovic is a late withdrawal from the Socceroo squad for Chile. The players are: Mark Schwarzer (Middlesbrough), Clint Bolton (Brisbane Strikers), Hayden Foxe (Sanfrecce Hiroshima), Stephen Laybutt (Parramatta Power), Shaun Murphy (Sheffield United), Con Blatsis (South Melbourne), Jason Van Blerk (West Bromwich Albion), Matthew Bingley (Northern Spirit), Paul Okon (Fiorentina), Matthew Horsley (Wollongong), Danny Tiatto (Manchester City), Craig Foster (Crystal Palace), Steve Corica (Wolverhampton Wanderers), Josip Skoko (Hajduk Split), Brad Maloney (Marconi), Kasey Wehrman (Perth Glory), Scott Chipperfield (Wollongong), Paul Agostino (1860 Munich), David Zdrilic (SSV Ulm), Pablo Cardozo (Sydney Olympic).

BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS

At the risk of me being the only soul apathetic enough to get a kick out of this, I share the following with you, says S-news contributor Andrew Howe. I wonder if, when Murtala Abbas (Knights) and Elliott Zwangobani (Cosmos) shook hands at the end of the Knights-Cosmos match at Knights Park last weekend, they realised the significance of such a coming together. For if you list all 2380 players who have played in at least one NSL match since 1977 in alphabetic order, Abbas comes first and Zwangobani last. The coincidence of these two particular players playing in the same match is quite amazing when you consider (i) there has been almost 5000 NSL games played and (ii) the two players have played a combined total of just 12 games. Fascinating!

REF REVIEW

Here's a quick review of one of our NSL refs. 'I thought Derek Rugg was a comedian! He ought to be, with a stage name like that. I've seen him referee just once (can't remember who the Kingz were playing), but it was very funny stuff indeed!'. That's from a Brisbane NSL watcher. And unrelated, Futsal Australia has rejected comments made in a letter in IS last week. Next week we will have Jim Roberts from Futsal Australia and some of the exciting things happening for FA.

WOLVES' TENNIS PLAYER!

Not content with leading the NSL going into last weekend (and what a great achievement it was) the club has announced the signing of Greg Burgess as its new Marketing Manager. Burgess is a local who apparently played on the international tennis circuit (although it's not a name that readily comes to mind!) 'Now is a perfect time to step up the marketing machine' said the club's press release. S-news says good onya, although no club should have to wait just go ahead!

WHICH CLUB AGAIN?

It's interesting to note that a couple of ex-Newcastle Breakers have ended up in fairly out of the way places. Reece Tolleneare is with SV Huizen, an amateur league club in Holland, while Josh Maguire is now a squad member at crack Romanian club Steau Bucharest. There has got to be a story in there somewhere. And speaking of Aussies Abroad, ex-Spirit man King Kresmir Marusic (and geez don't they miss the goatee beard brilliance of him) was suspended for six weeks at his club Lommel of Belgium. Six weeks? What did he do, strangle a referee?

'FOOTBALL FOOTBALL'

Marconi will appear on a worldwide TV program called 'Football Football'. It will be a half hour look at the club during the week the Strikers visited. This is on top of a Football Mondial special done two

seasons ago on Perth Glory, and South's Melbourne's inclusion in the same show last week during their coverage of WCC 2000.

* ADVANCE AUSTRALIA FAIR

Playing the national anthem before a game? Power now doesn't but Spirit does. So at the Power v Spirit game the away fans sang a rousing rendition of the national anthem minutes after the kick-off. Great singing from one of the best groups of supporters in the league. Speaking of Spirit, young wingback Antonio Faria told S-news his knee injury should be okay in about a week or two. If things don't work out however, he will have to go in for the big operation. Whatever happens, Faria will try to visit East Timor (the country of his parents) in the Aussie off-season. Spirit v East Timor all-stars? We'd love to see that!

SPORTS TONIGHT

If you are a Parra Power fan you would have thought they beat Falcons 1-0 away last Wednesday if you watched ST. It was of course 2-0. Yellow card Tim.

BLACKTOWN TAKE A BOW

Recently S-news congratulated Carlton on releasing arguably the most professional and glossy press kit in NSL history. In state league, Blacktown City Demons (NSW Super League) takes the award once again with a superb effort. All NSL and state sides could take a leaf out of these two clubs' approach to the media.

INSIDE SOCCER WINS POLL

The NZ fanzine Sitter! (you wouldn't want to miss it!) in their January issue independently reviewed all Australian weekly and monthly publications. Inside Soccer rated the highest with a 9 out of ten. Geez thanks, we'd like to thank our mums, God, the café down the road ...

NSL RUMOURS

Former Falcon Scott Miller to fly back to Victoria to join a local NSL side (his partner is Victorian and his contract is up at the end of the season.) Two Brisbane Strikers players from the Joeys have contracts owned by directors of the club? Carlton v South at Docklands Stadium?

KEYS, TICKETS, MONEY ...

You know when you fly, you usually do a quick check before you leave the house, right? Brazilian player Jiwago obviously didn't. He flew to Australia recently to trial with Glory but was turned back at Sydney airport because ... he forgot his visa. Glory's interest waned after that little episode. Meanwhile Perth's two Brazilians have been looking the goods in training. Insiders say they could be excellent acquisitions. Aurelio, the striker, speaks German, while Denilson, the defender, used to play with Glory's other Brazilian Edgar Junior. Tony Franken has been appointed Socceroo keeping coach.

HENDO: "CEST LA VIE"

Last week's IS ran with a page three story on Spirit's Paul Henderson predicting Spirit had turned the corner on the field and the home fans would help his side come home with a win in the Spirit v Carlton game last Wednesday. Sure enough, with twenty to go the Bob Stand continued its rousing support (despite being 1-2 down) and was rewarded with two late goals by Bingley and Saad. Hendo was there next to the Bob Stand when the players went to the fans to thank them after this must-win game. You had to feel for Hendo, he had done so well the previous game but Perosh was recalled. Hendo, you're still a champ in our eyes mate. As he said to S-news, "C'est la vie."

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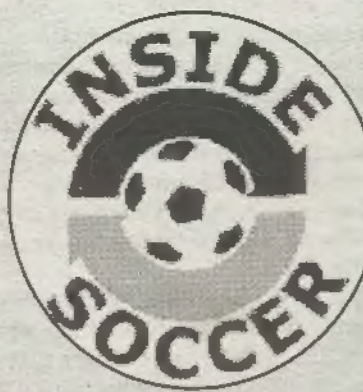
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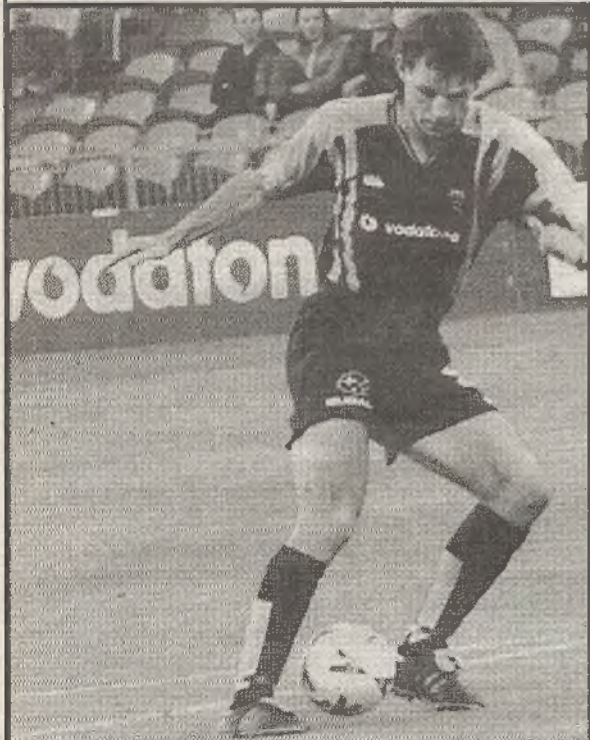
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FOOTBALL KINGZ

Ready to spring an NSL finals surprise



Kiwi footy legend Fred de Jong. Still going strong after all these years.

By Greg Blake

It probably shouldn't come as any shock that the grandly-named Football Kingz are still contending despite this being their first NSL season.

New Zealand football has had a long history of sticking it as far up the Aussies as possible at international level, and the oft-maligned Kingz of the pre-season appear to have eagerly followed that curious cultural sporting trend.

After overcoming a tardy start, Wynton Rufer's un-sung Auckland-based outfit is scoring goals, winning on the particularly arduous road trips, starting to beat good teams and generally providing that traditionally pain-in-the-bum Kiwi opposition of trans-Tasman lore.

The Kingz had lost just one of their previous eight going into round 19, and with two games up the sleeve might just edge into top six territory in what shapes as a critical February for all clubs involved in a thus-far perplexing top six dice.

Not bad for a mob boasting what the smarties here considered was no better than a flimsy roster at best, and capable of no more than nuisance value.

Only a couple of NSL prime-timers in Dino Mennillo and Marcus Stergiopoulos, the legendary Rufer on clipboard, an old stager in Fred de Jong, slightly familiar faces in Robbie Middleby, Lev Osman, Chris Jackson, Harry Ngata, Riki Van Steeden and Mike Utting, and a host of mostly Kiwi wanna-be's.

Only thing is that the chemistry is working and the wanna-be's are quickly warming to the concept of gatecrashing the great Aussie NSL summer bash.

As Carlton coach, Stuart Munro, acknowledged after the Kingz nearly snatched all the points at Olympic Park in January, "they are a good team...and getting better."

Sinking Perth with a rousing club record 4-1 win in round 18 has only served to underscore the potential which former Adelaide Force champ Mennillo believed was apparent much earlier.

"The potential of the club was one reason I made the move," explains Mennillo, the two-goal hero of the recent Glory demolition.

"And playing and training with these guys, you can just see the improvement as the season goes on.

"I've seen it in six months.

"I've seen players who I originally thought were a bit naive, but now these guys are really thinking that 'well, we can beat any Australian player we come up against."

Having been an integral part of Adelaide Force's decade-long play-off dynasty Mennillo has a pretty decent idea of what's required to play finals football.

And according to him, finals footy is very much on the agenda and best of the Kingz is yet to come.

"I think without a question we will (make the finals)," he says emphatically.

"I can tell you that now that I really can't see us not making the top six.

"People say that maybe I shouldn't be as optimistic as that, but I believe Wynton and Shane (assistant coach, Shane Rufer) have got something between them that they can relay on to these boys and we go into every game now thinking 'well, why can't we win, what haven't we got that we can't do?"

"We're that close - maybe sixty to seventy percent to where we want to be - and if we can get close to where we want to be in the last half of the season we'll be right there."

Wynton Rufer is probably on equitable terms with any Kiwi sporting export of the modern era, and his transition to coach appears seamless; from the sublime on-field to sideline master craftsman.

The Kingz players are almost un-

"The kids have something to look forward to now and in their own back yard they have something to aspire to - professional football," added Rufer.

"From my point of view I think it's been a very good move for the players that have come here for their careers," says Mennillo.

"To play under a coach like Wynton Rufer and be part of a team that is so attacking and that likes to score lots of goals.

"It's exciting to be in a team that's so open to new things and is not restricted, as such."

Despite a couple of unlikely to be repeated cameos for the Kingz when the team wasn't travelling well early season,



Big Kiwi Ricki Van Steeden: one of a number of relative unknowns settling in nicely to the Kingz' inaugural season.

Rufer is resigned to allowing his coaching to substitute for his first love of actually taking the paddock.

"I've always been pretty deliberate about wanting to become a coach - I mean I'd still rather be a player but the next best thing is to be coaching," he explained.

"But I'd have to say as well though that I wouldn't do it without my brother, Shane.

"We have a fantastic relationship which works very well and these days, the way the game is, it's important to have good people around you to achieve what you want to achieve.

"All the credit to my brother, who has been brilliant for me and the club."

If the team ethic is the key, in the serious matters of coaching and playing it appears the Kingz are coming along quite nicely, despite some stutters in boardroom affairs.

After the Perth game Mennillo made it clear that on-field commitment to the common cause is paramount.

"We've decided that as



The Kingz can shock the NSL says Dino Mennillo.

soon as someone gets a knock, or something goes against us, or one of our players is being confronted, we've decided to all get in," he said.

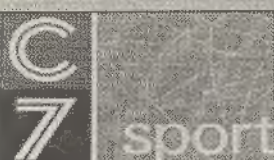
"We really want to work for each other despite any problems that have happened at this club."

If the thought of the Kingz making

the top six gets up some Aussie noses, that might be just steff cheese. You've been warned.



That's Joeys captain and Parra Power star Mark Byrnes at work in the Power office in his role as a development officer. Parra's almighty tussle with Spirit is on page 10 and Power GM Brad Levy is on page eight.



GREG BLAKE
C7 SOCCER COMMENTATOR
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I want to be wrong about this...dead wrong, but the more I delve into this rather dramatic change to the NSL competition - you know, a 12-club elite division etc., etc. - the more concerned I am that the clubs, Soccer Australia stakeholders and the SA board itself voted more on a broad concept than an actual specific plan.

Am I on my own here in believing that the game here should be way past making such momentous decisions based on little more than a flimsy (and possibly fanciful, until shown to be otherwise) outline.

We broached some of the potentially contentious issues in 'IS' one week ago - and received a heap of mostly constructive feedback from readers as a result (the pic of the bunch is on page six) - but have yet to see anything from SA that would suggest that voting on the changes was encouraged despite the lack of specific strategies and, realistically, taken in rela-

tive ignorance.

That being the case, it's little wonder the clubs were spot on in almost unanimously trying to postpone the radical reform plan for one year.

With precious little time to implement such sweeping changes you would hope and pray that we are going into this with a definite blueprint.

Otherwise we're just courting disaster.

Even my dodderly old mother, god bless her, tells me to this very day "if you're going to do something son, bloody well do it properly!"

I'm not sure if Football Kingz coach, Wynton Rufer (left), is trying to pull some pure New Zealand wool over our eyes, but the Kiwi champ believes the NSL influence over his abundance of All White internationals will ultimately still be beneficial to Aussie football.

In contrast to the merchants of doom (me), who are troubled by the concept of Kiwi stars potentially becoming even more likely to publicly pull Soccerroo pants down when it counts, Rufer says strong Kiwi footy is a bonus for all.

"We have to see the big picture here, and the big picture is World Cup," he told me.

"Firstly, you've got professional football; all the best Australian players play in Europe.

"Secondly, you have your national teams and the best thing for the national team is to play in the World Cup.

"So for our region, Oceania, to improve and to hopefully one day get direct entry into the World Cup, we need the other countries in Oceania to improve.

"FIFA will not let us have a direct entry if they are only ever going to see that Australia is the only good team in

Oceania.

"So you are obviously helping us by letting us be in the league, but you've seen that we can match it with your guys and obviously we're still going to improve.

"The All Whites are going to improve tremendously with the Kingz in the league.

"But the bigger picture is that if we can improve and Fiji can improve, then eventually we'll get a direct entry into the World Cup.

"And Australia will probably get there every time anyway, so it can only help Australia."

Rufer makes the concept of a stronger New Zealand national team almost palatable, doesn't he?

OK, the media can no longer talk to the referees, thus we cannot name names or quote directly.

However, I do understand one poor sick puppy amongst those rated most senior and valued on the NSL's list of referees is actually embracing the idea of being rated as definitive 'Hanging Judge', for season 1999/2000.

And our footballing world tilts a little further on its axis.

The concept of keeping tabs on the red card count was initiated in this column merely to highlight the dramatic increase in bookings this season and to hopefully initiate some discourse on how to bridge the widening gap between our officiating standards and the absolute and unanimous league-wide disgust at same.

Instead we might have created a monster.

Who knows, maybe we'll have an official SA-sanctioned 'Hanging Judge' league ladder by this time next season, with an appropriate trophy to be awarded at season's end.

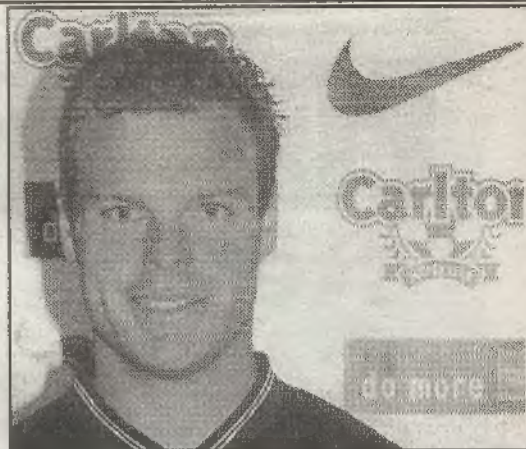
God knows, we've been perplexed by the refs often enough this season that such a bizarre concept would probably be embraced without question.

Anyway, clear leader in the race for ref most likely to reach for the red after 18 NSL rounds is Matthew Breeze, who has already more than doubled his average of red cards in previous seasons with eleven one-way tickets during the current campaign.

Are congratulations now in order?

All being well the NSL's consensus scariest player, Andrew Marth (top), is up to join the currently 29-strong 300-game club this weekend, when Carlton travels to Gippsland.

And while Marth gets the nod as all-star tough, the big guy himself reckons he's a little bit misunderstood.



"It's just the way I play the game," he says of his fiercely competitive nature.

"It's just the way I've been brought up I suppose.

"I cop a little bit of stick on the ground, people saying I'm a hacker and so forth, but I've scored quite a few goals in my career and I do play a bit of soccer as well.

"Maybe ask my teammates, I think they'll vouch for that."

He does have a point.

Twice a championship-winning skipper, five times grand finalist, Marston Medal winner, equal record number of grand final goals, a string of youth league grand finals and some 300 games and 50-odd goals.

It's not a bad career CV for a bloke too often dismissed as a mere career nasty.

Does he still have the fire in the belly?

"Most definitely," says Marth.

"Carlton bought me here to do a job and the job is to win a grand final.

"Unfortunately I had a pretty bad season last year by my standards for various reasons, but I put in a hard pre-season this year and all the work is paying off."

And still motivated, you betcha.

"What keeps me going is winning...I love winning and I absolutely hate losing, he says.

"I'll do absolutely anything it takes for my team to win and I'm very serious about my soccer.

"Hopefully I'll be around for another four years or so, as long as my knees hold up.

"At the moment they are brilliant and my fitness is great, so I'll just keep on going."

• Nice effort, 'Stabber'.

*Please note my new E-mail address is grblake@primus.com.au. Feel free to contact with your feedback.



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DO MORE, MUCH MORE

Dave McPherson with Aidan Ormond

Australia still is The Lucky Country. After riding on the sheep's back for many of the years European migrants established soccer here in the fifties and sixties, our economy powers its way through 2000 showing no signs of slowing down. Add to that the beaches, the lifestyle, the standard of living and the weather; why would you want to live anywhere else? And with moves afoot to present a more viable NSL beginning later this year, our premier domestic competition is becoming an increasingly attractive option for our younger players who want to play professional football.

Dave McPherson, Carlton's 27-game Scottish international, is a professional footballer in every sense of the word, both on and off the field. He has been a player for the last 20-years with Scottish giants Hearts and Glasgow Rangers before joining ambitious Carlton at the beginning of this season.

But there is professional and there is professional.

My theory is that life in Australia for young players may in fact be too good. Some simply don't have desire or professionalism the European leagues - built on history and competitiveness - clearly have. To make it in the higher echelons of a UK or European league requires discipline, ambition, skill, attitude, focus, bloody-mindedness and grit. And very few

"And I think with the lifestyle and wages - the players get paid very well considering - it's important to have a good attitude all the time. One thing I have tried to impress is what you do at training as well.

"If these players want to make it at a higher level," he said "they need to show much more drive and enthusiasm, so many are laid-back that unless they have that incredible natural talent I don't see a

"To be a soccer player you have to be talented and ambitious and want to stick it out. I think you are right, it's one of the best countries in the world to live in ... but there's not that drive and ambition with the players here."

future for them on the world stage.

"Back home you had to have success and it was a lot harder ... it separates the wheat from the chaff with the young players," said the former Glasgow Rangers defender.

A good example of this lack of cold hard professionalism was the Northern Spirit v Carlton game last week. With about 20 minutes to go the Blues went 2-1 up. The points were in the bag; it was shut up shop time. But they let a desperate Spirit back in.

With McPherson out due to an injury

"I think a tournament like the World Club Championship would have been a marvelous showcase for the likes of Archie and Alex had we played there."

In fact with Moreira's Brazilian background he would have been vital in the side's preparation, not to mention a good angle for a story.

The World Club Championship is clearly something McPherson has a lot of time for, and he would love to play in next year's edition (if there is one!)

"South handled themselves very well. They did not let Australian Soccer down ... it's a very tough job to get a result over there.

"It's a marvelous stepping stone for Australian Soccer and no doubt all clubs must love

to play in such a tournament.

"Perhaps it is a problem in Australia that the WCC has highlighted, that they don't get a chance to gauge themselves against some of the world's best," he reasoned.

"One of the reasons why I came out was for the chance to play in such a prestigious tournament. At my age (36) it would be a wonderful way to finish my career on the international stage with that tournament in a Carlton shirt."

Naturally McPherson tips his side to be around when the business of the NSL gets serious. His predictions, however, would give heart to the Bob Standers of North Sydney.

"The top six as I see it will be Olympic, Carlton, Glory, South, Wollongong and Spirit. That is my tip at this early stage.

"The soccer centres of Australia seem to be Perth with its British background and huge crowds, then there is Sydney with sides like Spirit."

So in McPherson's view, Melbourne is not a soccer capital despite its successes on the park in the nineties.

A large part of this comes down to media support.

This one example highlights the dilemma. At Christmas four Carlton players (Slater, Conroy, Anastasiadis and McPherson) visited a young cancer patient. A grateful family loved the visit itself and if any media had covered it would have provided good publicity about that particular type of leukemia.

The charity work of the Carlton play-



ers went by without the public in Melbourne knowing. The players were more upset with the fact that the disease missed out on publicity more than anything. If it had been an AFL player, well,...

As one Carlton insider told me: "An AFL player farts and it's news."

"I don't know whether it's a bias, but soccer in Melbourne gets very very little publicity," noted the big Carlton defender.

"Obviously we have seen other cities and the coverage soccer gets there.

"Maybe we just have to be successful for people to stand up and take notice?" lamented the big Scot, who couldn't walk down the street without being noticed back home.

"The fact that the club has been going for just two-and-a-half years makes it probably a little too early to be expecting crowds of over 5,000 regularly turning up. If we can become more successful then maybe...

"I've certainly settled in to Melbourne. It's been a success in one way because the side has played well, albeit a little inconsistently.

"I've been disappointed with one or two aspects. The politics of Australian soccer seems to be more hands on regarding players and what happens on the field but it is something we just have to ignore and get on with it."

Two decades ago Australian soccer, at both state and national level, was awash with British players. Some quality, most of a standard not much better than what was already here.

Dave McPherson stands out as being a British signing with genuine cachet. He is someone who can enhance our game with his approach to professional football. And we should be proud that Carlton has this player, the only NSL player to have played in a World Cup and European Championships.

In part two next week: Dave McPherson's Italia '90 recollections, his best Scottish players, his ambitions in coaching and the deal that almost saw him play for one of the biggest European clubs. Not to be missed.



Dave McPherson in one of the 27 games he played for Scotland. He is top row second from right.

make it.

In short, too many local players, particularly the young ones, are just too laid-back and don't take football as seriously as they could or should. They're soft. After all, if they don't play in the first team it wouldn't kill 'em, would it?

"I am glad you said that. It's something I've noticed since I arrived here in July 1999," said McPherson.

"To be a soccer player you have to be talented and ambitious and want to stick it out. I think you are right, it's one of the best countries in the world to live in ... but there's not that drive and ambition with the players here.

"I've spoken to a number of British players here who have backed that assessment up," he said pointedly.

in training the day before, Carlton conceded two late goals from the centre of their defence. It ended 3-2 to the delirious Spirit.

"I spoke to Stuart (Munro) after the Northern Spirit game. That's something to work on. Maybe it's that little bit of lack of experience and professionalism.

"If you have aspirations to win a championship then you have to learn to hold on to a 2-1 scoreline with 20 minutes to go away from home," said a disappointed McPherson.

Having said that, he likes what he sees from a number of the Carlton young and not so young brigade.

"Alex Moreira and Archie Thompson could go overseas, they are very talented boys.

CARLTON CD WINNERS



Congratulations to the following winners of our Carlton Soccer CD promotion. By the way, it is a brilliant CD and the song 'A Dream Won't Do' should be played loud as you drive around Melbourne! It rocks. Prizes sent this week.

Answer: Alex Moreira.

Winners:

- 1: Alex Jasenko, N. Fitzroy, Vic**
- 2: Andrew Wales, St Kilda, Vic**
- 3: Mary Xiridakis, Kealba, Vic**

Readers' forum

First, I must confess that I am not replying from Soccer Australia - though I hope that Inside Soccer gets a reply eventually, so that we may get a bit of a glimpse into these rather murky waters (Greg Blake P.11 25/1/ New NSL criteria needs clarity and wider consultation.)

Second, I want to congratulate you on hitting two of the big three questions about the second division right on the head.

First, if the criteria for eligibility to 'remain' in the First Division are serious, they have to be the same as the criteria to 'enter' the First Division. Therefore, they simply must apply to promotion from the Second Division. Even if there is "automatic" promotion in the sense of not having to play a promotion/relegation tie, there cannot be "automatic" promotion in the sense of not meeting standards for eligibility to enter.

The only concession that ought to be made is that teams who have succeeded in landing "two level" sponsorships should have their sponsorships counted 'as if' they were already in the first division. But if that does not bring them over the line to stand as a first division club, then no matter how well they do in the second division, in the second division they must remain.

This is the only way to go if Soccer Australia are serious about the criteria for remaining in the league. And if that means that in most years, the second division champion does not gain promotion, so be it.

Second, and closely related, is the question of how a second division club would be able to step up to the level of player payrolls required to contest the first division. The answer is clearly that it would only do so with extreme difficulty unless it had a substantial "war chest" on hand to bring star players onto the squad.

In practice, the implications are much the same as the first. It might take four or five years of success as a second division club to build up the surplus required to properly support promotion.

The third question, which you did not ask, is how the second division as proposed can actually 'serve' as the second division for a national first division?

On the original model, teams would come primarily from NSW and Victoria, with the possible token team from Adelaide and/or Brisbane. Now, one of the roles of the second division is to act as a "staging area" for entry into the first division.

But, since Western Australian is not represented in the second division, if the first division team was ever relegated, then Western Australia could never again be represented.

Clearly, if there is going to be a promotion/relegation relationship between the national first division and second division, then the second division must be representative of the whole country. And, indeed, this is another model which has some proponents - one that includes teams from around the country, including possibly places like Tasmania or Darwin. But inclusion of these teams

would lead to a blow out of travel expenses.

One problem in arriving at a sensible model may be a limited perspective on the possible alternatives. The obvious point of departure is the English divisional structure in a series of nationwide divisions.

However, this ignores other structures in place in successful footballing nations, such as the regional structure of Italy's Serie C.

Indeed, a little reflection should confirm that the only way to reconcile limiting travel expenses with spreading the second division net more widely than the Sydney/Melbourne axis is to set up a regional structure.

In effect, the proposal to focus the second division on the Sydney/Melbourne axis is a tacit admission that Australia is not really ready for a second division round-robin spanning the country.

A regional structure has a better chance of success because it provides a closer match to the current state of football in Australia. For example, one could allocate the different state federations to four regional groups (see note below).

The federations in each group would work out arrangements to provide a 6 team group competition of twenty rounds, after which the top three teams in each group would enter intergroup play, while the bottom three in each group would contest their place with state league teams eligible for promotion.

Thus the primary focus of the second division would be in providing state league teams with opportunities for interstate competition, and only secondarily on providing a promotion platform into the first division.

If a second division structured on regional lines is very successful, a number of clubs would develop the capacity to play in a national round robin. That would provide the foundation upon which a single, national second division could be launched (and the regional structure would become the third division, as in Italy).

If it falls short of this, then at least it provides state league sides with an opportunity to taste national competition.

[Note on Groups]

I think the natural groupings would be two organised around Sydney and Melbourne, and two for the federations that are "too far" from the Sydney/Melbourne axis. Living in Newcastle, I'd think that it would be preferable for Northern New South Wales to remain outside of the Sydney group - in order to promote the development of football in the northern part of our federation. That implies four groups along the lines of:

- (1) Northern Territory, Queensland, and Northern New South Wales
- (2) New South Wales, Western New South Wales, and the ACT
- (3) Victoria and Tasmania
- (4) South Australia and West Australia

Bruce McFarling,
Shortland, NSW

Got a problem? Want to know something? Then why don't you ask Kingz' star Aussie wingback

Marcus Stergiopoulos!

Ask Stergiboy!

Grant's question:
Serg, do you wear your partner's underwear and if so, would you recommend it?

Stergiboy
G'day Grant, Well that's a very interesting question you have, unfortunately my partner is a size 8 and I can't fit into them. I have heard of players wearing their wives underwear during games i.e. David Beckham, but it's not for me I'm sorry, so I can't recommend it.

But what I suggest for you is to maybe try on your partner's underwear and walk around the house to see if it's good for you. Thanks for your question and keep up the support.

Trish's Question: Marcus, I have seen you playing in defence for the Kingz but had always thought of you as a midfield player. Where do you prefer to play, where have you played for other clubs and who is your favourite player

Stergiboy
G'day Trish. When I arrived here at the Kingz Wynton thought I was a centre midfielder, then he saw me play against Carlton in round one and realized I wasn't. I had spoken with Wynton about my favourite position as an attacking left wingback as that is where I have played for the past five seasons at my last two clubs, Carlton FC & Gippsland Falcons.

As for my favourite two players it would have to be David Beckham for his amazing crossing of the ball and Ryan Giggs for his ability to dribble past players, it's great to watch. But I'm not a Manchester United supporter, I'm a Everton supporter, I just wanted to say that.

Thanks for your question Trish and I look forward in seeing you at the games.

Eddie's Question: How do the young New Zealanders in the side stand up to those Aussies that you have encountered in the past?

Stergiboy
Hi Eddie, well I think that it is unfair for me to compare the young Kiwi players to the young Aussie players I have played with. Simon Colosimo who is worth one million dollars on the transfer market today is a senior international for the Australian team and plays for Carlton. Vince Grella plays in the Italian Serie B with Empoli and also is a



Socceroo. Marco Bresciano plays for Italian Serie B team Empoli and Danny Allsopp is at Manchester City in the English First Division. They have all had the Australian Soccer league to play in as a stepping stone before they went onto bigger and better things.

But NOW with the Football Kingz in the Australian Soccer league it will not be long before you see more Kiwi players heading overseas.

Wynton Rufer is our Oceania Player of the Century and he comes from Wellington, Simon Elliott plays for LA Galaxy in the American Major Soccer League and Danny Hay plays for Leeds United in the Premier League in England.

So I believe that New Zealand is closing the gap between Australia, you just have to look at the Confederations Cup when New Zealand beat Australia 1-0 to see how far New Zealand soccer has come.

Mike's Question: How was it being goalie during the recent game when Michael Utting was injured? Had you played goalie before and how was it you were chosen to do the job?

Stergiboy
Mike, the game against Adelaide Force on the 26/11/99 where you saw me make my debut in goals was certainly a scary experience, you always imagine playing in different positions on the field but never as a goal keeper.

The only other time I played in goals was for Bradford City against Sheffield United in the youth league but never at senior level before.

I have been in goals at training on a number of occasion when Wynton was practicing his shooting.

Even our own Oceania Player of the Century found it hard to pass me, so when Mike Utting was injured against Adelaide Force, Wynton remembered those UNBELIEVABLE saves at training and said, 'in you go Stergiboy'.

*All 'Ask Stergiboy' questions are to be directed to editor@insidesoccer.com.au or you can fax them on 02 9806 0553. We thank the Kingz site www.kingzfan.co.nz/ for their assistance in bringing Stergiboy to us.

Coming soon to IS: Andy Harper, Robert Liparoti, Christian Care and the Newcastle Heartbreakers.

AUSSIES on the world stage

A round-up of how our Aussies players fared abroad this last week ...

SCHWARZER FUMBLES BUT BOZZA AND AGOSTINO STAR

Mark Bosnich was at the centre of a real comic strip before last Monday night's game against Arsenal. The Manchester United goalkeeper lined up for the kick-off before referee Paul Durkin spotted he was wearing a yellow jersey which clashed with Arsenal colours.

A record Premiership crowd of 58,293 waited while a United official found another strip. Eventually, a trip to the club's nearby superstore resolved the problem. Bosnich finally started in a fetching grey

Mark Schwarzer.

Both of the Aussies were in goals for their respective teams but Bosnich emerged with a smile on his face after United inflicted a 1-0 defeat on Schwarzer's team.

It was a bad day all round for Schwarzer who watched Bosnich save a penalty to prevent Middlesbrough from taking the lead and then to make it even worse for Schwarzer he let in a soft goal as a David Beckham shot spun out of his hands with only three minutes to go. To make it a really really bad day, he was also booked.

Other Premier League teams were involved in the FA Cup and Leeds United played at Aston Villa where they crashed out 3-2 to a Benito Carbone hat-trick. Harry Kewell played a full game but was not his dominating self.

Before the weekend's Nationwide Division One games Birmingham City's Australian wing-wizard Stan Lazaridis told his manager that he is ready and raring to return to the side after recovering from injury.

Lazaridis has been on the bench in recent weeks as he looks for full fitness following his knee-injury that has kept him out of the side for some time - but he felt that the time has come for him to return to the starting eleven.

Lazaridis commented: "Ultimately it is down to Trevor and I don't want to rush back but I have found it difficult to come on late on games and settle in.

"In my own mind I know that I am ready to start a league game. I feel near enough back to full fitness and ideally I would like to start at the weekend."

Lazaridis got his wish when he started against Stockport in a 2-1 home win but he only lasted until the end of the first half and was replaced at the start of the second half.

In Crystal Palace's 2-2 home draw

with high-flying Huddersfield Craig Foster, another Chile bound tourist, continued his comeback from injury with a full game for Palace but fellow Aussie Nick Rizzo remained on the bench ... again!

Another good result for Crewe Alexander who drew 1-1 away to Grimsby with Jason Kearton again in goals for Crewe for duration of the game.

Shaun Murphy's consistent performances in the centre of defence for Sheffield United has earned him a trip to Chile and he continued his form as Sheffield drew 1-1 away to Ipswich but, like Schwarzer, he also earned a yellow card.

In Portsmouth's 3-0 home win over Bamsley Aussie Mike Panopoulos started the game but was replaced in the 78th minute while fellow Aussie Andy Petterson remained on the bench.

In Wolverhampton's 1-1 away draw at Wallsall Kevin Muscat played the full game while Chile tourist Steve Corica was in the squad but did not see any action.

Two Aussies were featured in the game between West Bromwich Albion and Swindon, which ended in a 1-1 draw with Jason Van Blerk playing a full game for West Brom while Frank Talia kept goal for Swindon.

Van Blerk, after a long absence, has also been picked for the national team that will take part in a four nation tournament in Chile.

In the Nationwide Second Division Tim Cahill played the full ninety as Millwall's drive toward the top received a jolt after a 2-0 away loss to Chesterfield. Lucas Neill has not returned to the Millwall starting line-up since his return from the Olyroo games in Adelaide.

Andrew Bernal remained on the bench as Reading beat Colchester 2-0 in another Nationwide Second Division game.

In Scotland both Tony Vidmar and Craig Moore played full games for Rangers as they beat St Johnstone 2-0 to advance to the next round of the Scottish Cup.

Mark Viduka's Celtic had their Cup



Jason Van Blerk: celebrated his Socceroo recall with a full game for the Baggies.

game postponed because of the strong winds in Glasgow which caused damage to a grandstand roof.

In the Italian Serie A Paul Okon warmed up for his trip to Chile by sitting on the bench again for the duration of Fiorentina's 1-0 home win over Reggina.

In Serie B Marco Bresciano was on the bench for Empoli as they beat Savoia 1-0 at home but Vince Grella did not make the squad.

In a build up to the resumption of the Bundesliga, Munchen 1860's second team beat the first team in a training match 4:1 with Aussie Paul Agostino the best player on the ground scoring all four goals.

Maybe Agostino is set to finally show his scoring qualities after having had attempt after attempt but no success in his seven matches before the winter break.

Young Aussie Robert Bustos who has spent the last few years playing in Argentina is set to return home.

Bustos has asked to be released early from his contract (which was to expire in June) and his club has agreed to his request.

Bustos, who has missed his homeland and his family, is expected back in Australia within the next few weeks.

Part of Bustos' motivation to return is his desire to place himself in the NSL.

Confident in his own ability, Bustos believes that he has a role to play in our national league and would be open to offers for the remainder of the season and beyond.



Robert Bustos: back soon after his stint at Nueva Chicago and looking to play NSL.

number - although it didn't actually have a number.

Another change, at half-time, left the keeper as the 'Man with No Name' as his surname did not appear on his back as usual.

Bosnich didn't have such an eventful game on the weekend when United played Middlesbrough - home of fellow Aussie 'keeper and number one for the Chile tour

Italian soccer bosses were expected to get tough on the alleged trafficking of young players from three continents including Australia, after alleged violation of rules concerning minors.

Football federation leaders are to meet on Feb 3 after seven current and former officials of Torino and two junior league clubs in the Piedmont region, Gabetto and Beinasco Borgaretto, were sent before a Federcalcio disciplinary committee last week.

The seven are suspected of having organised a network trafficking in school-boy footballers from Australia and Japan, all less than 16 years old.

According to the newspaper La Repubblica the first boys - seven Japanese, one only 12 years old - arrived in Italy five years ago.

In 1996 and 1997, 10 other Japanese boys and a dozen Italians, mostly from the economically depressed south, were recruited.

And in 1998, seven Australian boys were sent to Italy, and three more the following year.

The so-called "baby-calciatori" were accommodated in an apartment building and trained at football camps at Gabetto and Beinasco Borgaretto.

News of the affair broke when the Italian consul in Brisbane, Antonio Alessandro, was alerted by the parents of the boys from the Australian city, who had been sent to Italy. Others were from Darwin and Cairns.

The seven football officials, Pierluigi and Guglielmo Aldo Gabetto, Franco Melotti, Gian Marco Calleri, Massimo Vidulich, Leonardo Michelin and Vittorio Ronco, are facing sports sanctions and possible indictment for breaking Italian laws.

Repubblica said Federcalcio investigators suspect them of violating parental rights and faking residence papers.

According to a Federcalcio tally, 5,308 foreign boys under the age of 16 played in Italian football clubs in 1998, mostly as amateurs. The federation counts 8,000 youth teams among its ranks.

At the meeting, Federcalcio is expected to set up new rules to put an end to the trafficking in minors.

Under the new rules, youth clubs would only be able to send one player to other regions for a maximum one-year period. Residence permits would also have to be provided for foreign minors.



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HOOKED FOR LIFE

Parra Power's GM Brad Levy



Walter Ardone in action for Parramatta at the opening game of the season against Marconi.

By Roger Sleeman

As Brad Levy, general manager of Parramatta Power, surveys the vast expanse of Parramatta Stadium from the Western Grandstand, his solitary thought is how long it will take to fill this stadium for Power home matches.

When Levy was charged with the responsibility of creating a successful NSL club in three years by the Parramatta Leagues Club, he was fully aware of the enormity of the assignment that awaited him.

However, this high-profile former A.R.L. and N.S.W.R.L. development manager, was never one to refuse a challenge. He is confident the experience he shared as Noel Whittaker's assistant in the battle for rugby league supremacy will contribute in a large way to the ultimate success of Parramatta Power.

One thing is certain, when Brad Levy elected to lead the Parramatta Power into the 21st century, he made a career move which could conceivably be the most profound act in his life in sports management.

In this interview with Roger Sleeman, Levy compares his experiences in rugby league and football and discusses in detail the efforts of Parramatta Power to establish itself as a major force in the NSL.

ROGER SLEEMAN

How similar are the conflicts which you experienced in rugby league to those you have witnessed in the NSL?

BRAD LEVY

There are certainly comparisons to be drawn. The revolution in rugby league may have been viewed from the sidelines as a major catastrophe for the future of the sport but the ultimate intention was to make the game stronger through rationalisation.

The split in the ranks between the Super League and the A.R.L. did arouse doubts as to whether the competing parties shared the fans undying passion for the game.

Many people accused News Limited of self interest but it couldn't be denied that the increased coverage of the game on Pay television would bring more money into the game and make it even more pro-

fessional. However, both parties were aware that compromise finally was the only solution where a national competition under the control of the A.R.L. would secure the future of the game.

Since I've been at Parramatta Power, there has been further talk of an elite breakaway league, but now the Soccer-21 plan has the major focus for the 2001/002 season, there hasn't been further mention.

Some of the clubs claim the Soccer-21 document has been hoisted upon them too quickly but the reality is they've all had an opportunity to input the plan. Also, it appears that some of the clubs have been given long periods of grace to become more profes-

sional so the game can progress and take its rightful place as a major sport.

R.S. The NSL clubs which face

of juniors playing.

One of the major problems the game has is a lack of promotion and this stems from a lack of dollars in the game. Any finance which Soccer Australia obtains goes to the national teams while the clubs are left to fend for themselves.

Soccer Australia needs to promote from the top down rather than making the clubs promote from the bottom up. The affiliation fees are paid by the NSL clubs but there's little evidence that any of these funds are used to promote the League.

Other sports like rugby league provide grants to the member clubs for promotion so we've a long way to go yet.

R.S. Is the Parramatta Leagues Club happy with the progress of Parramatta Power?

B.L. At this stage of proceedings, the Board sees the club making progress but most importantly they're committed to the three-year plan which was originally projected. The Board recognises our late inclusion to the NSL in June didn't allow much time to carry out some of the marketing plans we had in mind and patience is the key word.

The Board is very happy with the number of families following the club but we also face competition in drawing supporters from people who might follow Marconi and Sydney United.

Of course there's the inevitable comparison with the crowd success enjoyed by Northern Spirit, particularly in its first season and its a real challenge to emulate such an achievement.

Most significantly, we have 37,500 amateur players in our catchment area so when the winter competitions start shortly we'll be doing everything to promote the club and invite these people to be part of proceedings.

R.S. Summer soccer has been

Any finance which Soccer Australia obtains goes to the national teams while the clubs are left to fend for themselves - they (SA) need to promote the game top down.

Brad Levy on Soccer Australia

demise from the NSL may suggest they have more right to remain in the league than a club like Parramatta Power which is in its maiden season. Do you believe they have any justification for this opinion?

B.L. These clubs have a proud tradition and one can sympathise with their predicament. However, can the NSL operate effectively and deliver the best product with fifteen or sixteen teams when there's a constant drain of talent overseas and clubs are fighting to remain solvent on a yearly basis?

While all sporting people shared the emotions of South Sydney several weeks ago, it shouldn't be forgotten that Souths had the opportunity to merge with Balmain or Cronulla and they chose not to.

Those affected NSL clubs are fully aware of Soccer-21 and also have the chance to merge. It's all about putting the game's hat on and thinking globally to make more professional clubs and a stronger NSL.

Without a viable NSL, the game won't develop beyond its present reputation as a game which is strong only at the grass-roots level.

R.S. Why has football at a senior level never captured the imagination of the sporting public in Australia on a large scale?

B.L. When I was involved with junior rugby league we always believed that football would take over from the other winter sports because of the large number

played for eleven seasons in the NSL. Are there too many other attractions that make it difficult for the game to succeed in summer?

B.L. Obviously, the competition with other major sports was an impediment to the game succeeding in winter. At the same time football is a game which can be played all year round and it's really pleasant to attend a match on a balmy summer's night.

We've found at Parramatta Power that if people come to the game once, they want to come again. It's all about providing

a good contest with modern facilities like we have at Parramatta Stadium and you start to generate a regular following.

Even some of our League's club supporters are starting to attend matches which has given us the impetus to try some cross promotions between the two codes over the next few weeks.

From our point of view, summer soccer can work if we promote the game as an entertainment package where you get value for money and can't wait to come back to the next match.

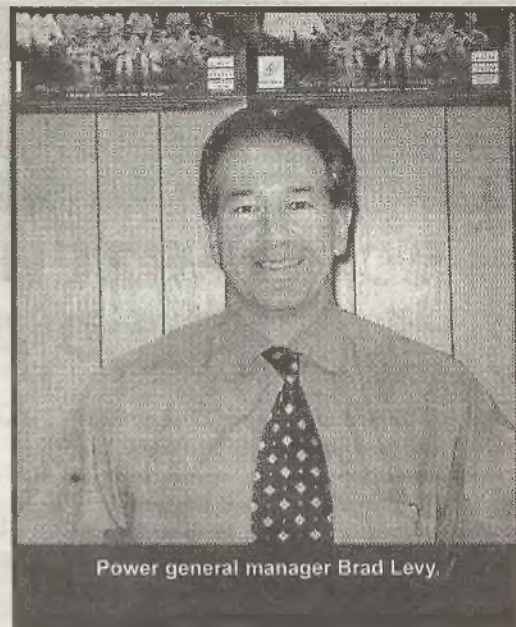
R.S. Were you disappointed about not being able to use Parramatta Stadium for the recent Four Nations Olympic tournament?

B.L. I wasn't totally familiar with Soccer Australia's arrangements for the series but it certainly would've been a shot in the arm for our club to stage some of these games.

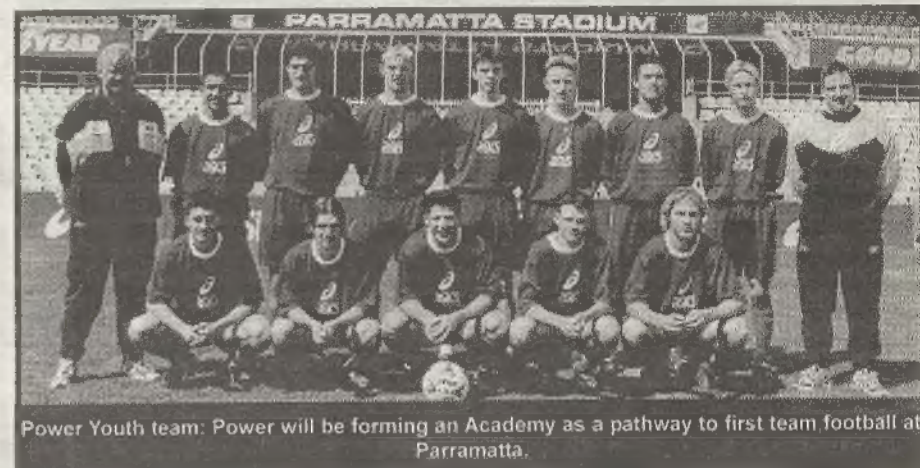
If you provide the public with high level competition at a venue like Parramatta Stadium, you can draw good crowds as was evidenced by the large crowds which watched Brazil play the Olyroos two seasons ago at our ground. Certainly, the crowds at Hindmarsh were very disappointing and hopefully a lesson was provided for Soccer Australia in the future.

R.S. Is Parramatta Power going to be another production line for the purpose of selling players overseas to finance the club's activities?

B.L. If players are good enough to earn their living overseas we won't stand in their way and if the club profits by this, the funds will be put back into the club for



Power general manager Brad Levy.



Power Youth team: Power will be forming an Academy as a pathway to first team football at Parramatta.

future development.

However, the club will do everything in its power to raise the profile of football in Australia so young players can receive sufficient financial rewards to stay in Australia.

In the near future we will be introducing an Academy for young players to develop through to senior level.

The future is certainly rosy for Parramatta Power, its patrons and supporters.

NSL Criteria continued

WELCOME TO THE NSL PAGE



All NSL games from last weekend are on pages 10-17, and the Australia Day round is on pages 18-21. The NYL round-up from both north and south is on page 22

Fixture changes:

*Please note that the R21 game between Olympic and Wolves at Belmore will start at 6pm on Sunday Feb 13

* R23 Carlton v Force game at Olympic Park will be played on Sat. Feb 26 at 7pm

* R24 game between Cosmos and Carlton at Bruce Stadium will be played on Tuesday March 7 at 7.30pm

NSL TOP SCORERS:

PAUL FOSTER (Strikers)

11 goals	
PABLO CARDOZO (SO)	10
MICHAEL CURCIJA (SM)	10
ALEX MOREIRA (CAR)	10
CON BOUTSIANIS (PG)	9
ESALA MASI (VW)	9
SASO PETROVSKI (VW)	9

CROWD COMPARISON:

Cumulative to Round 19

99/00: 779,769

98/99: 777,692



Continued from front page

"For the existing clubs the criteria are based on financial stability, administration, crowds, facilities etc.

"Why 12 teams for the new NSL first division? If you look at the league at the moment we need to improve in many areas - crowds, grounds, corporate attractiveness. Interestingly it was in 95/96 that crowds were at their highest when there were 12 teams in the NSL.

"By restricting it to 12, on a regional basis - it will ensure all population centres are represented. For example, if Brisbane meets the minimum criteria, its regional status will ensure their inclusion. Brisbane has been allocated one position in the league, as have the other cities, like Newcastle, Adelaide, Perth etc. In Sydney and Melbourne there will be three each."

The example of Wollongong, a club on the thriving south coast of NSW would appear to be secure, even though it is not considered a regional side.

"I don't think Wollongong is considered a regional team, it is considered a Sydney side. Remember, the regional representation sets the minimum. If Wollongong satisfies the criteria and is one of the better clubs, they will be in. NSW and Victoria are not to exceed eight places."

Going on that theory, two Sydney clubs are to be cut and either Falcons or Knights would be on the chopping block in Victoria, assuming Breakers and Wolves are in.

It would appear the weighting of regional representation in the assessment criteria, while undeniable, is not a clearly defined element of the process.

"Regarding promotion and relegation there is still a fair bit of work to be done. It is not automatic promotion/ relegation, which will come within two years," added Scarsella.

"Promotion and relegation helps clubs that struggle for whatever reason. Provided there are clubs that are stronger than first division organizations, it gives those first division clubs the opportunity to regroup without being cut completely, and other clubs lower down to aspire to a higher league.

"I cannot think of any league in the world that doesn't have promotion and relegation," he added.

Promotion from the second to the first will begin after the second year of

the relaunched league, not the first, however promotion from a state league to the second division "still needs to be worked out" noted Scarsella.

That begs the question, if it wasn't worked out, what was the vote for?

"It is a difficult juggling act regarding promotion and relegation. The way I would envisage it," explained the affable Scarsella, "if you were bottom of the second division after the second year, there may be some sort of play-off with regional representation a part of that process."

"There is no promotion and relegation based on results alone."

"Because of the regional representation an Altona Magic could not replace a Perth Glory, however, if Glory for some reason could not meet the criteria and there was no club in Perth that could meet the criteria also, then there is a chance that such a market could not have a side."

As Scarsella emphasized, it's all about financial stability, not results when it comes to promotion and relegation.

"My hope is that we don't use the folding stuff for legal challenges, we will not waste money, but I also accept it is a possibility. I am not discounting it."

"The second division is likely to be largely a Sydney/Melbourne league. The numbers in the league will probably be less than the first division. It has two-fold aims: state leagues are struggling so it creates incentive, and struggling clubs in the NSL in its current format have a chance to regroup in the second division."

"In other words, no club in the current NSL will be excluded by Soccer Australia. They will be playing in our league, it just depends on which one, first or second."

Scarsella expects Soccer Australia will be spending a million on the first division next year with its promoting and marketing, and feels a naming rights sponsor is likely for both leagues next season.

Time is not on our side when it comes to this relaunch. Much work still needs to be done on the detail before clubs can feel secure about the package in its totality.

It's a fine sentiment to want to improve the league - and Inside Soccer supports that - but surely the vote taken was a vote for principle only.

Take us on faith and we'll deliver it, seems to be the message here. Well I hope they are over the details, because an almighty stuff-

up looms if we are not diligent and careful.

And then there is the issue of the refereeing standard - currently at an all-time low - for this relaunched league. That's another vexatious issue we will be looking at in more detail in the coming weeks.

But this NSL issue will remain on Inside Soccer's agenda, it's too important not to.

Meanwhile, enjoy your footy!

After one week on top of the league the always exciting Wollongong is back in second place.

Their clash with NSW rivals Newcastle will be fascinating. After a week's rest from a particularly heavy set of seven last week (see Branko Culina's comments in this issue), both sides (like the rest of the NSL) will be refreshed and desperate to win.

After two losses Lee Sterrey's men will not want a draw, they need a win to ensure their top six status.

South Melbourne's visit to Spirit last year was a classic battle. Spirit won last year in front of over 15,000. The club will hope for a 10,000 plus for this game.

The encouraging thing for them is David Seal's form. He looked the goods against Parra and that is not good news for defences nationally.

In other games, the pick would be Marconi v Perth; Glory may have their Brazilians in the team for this vital top six clash.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"... they were timid in defence, impotent in attack and dysfunctional in midfield."

The Australian's Peter Krupka on Newcastle's display in Adelaide recently.

"The referees are killing Australian Soccer."

Spirit's Graham Arnold saying what many believe.

"He's (Ratcliffe) honorable, an honorable man, very hard working but his players let him down, our players have ruined him. I'd like to shoot some of the players for what they did to him, they did not look after him and some undermined him."

Sydney United President Marko Franovic.

"I couldn't believe my ears when he (Postecoglou) said they had outplayed us; you would only have to look at our shots tally compared to theirs, so let's not talk bulls...t. They weren't outstanding last year when they won the championship, but they were able to grind out results when they had poor games. I don't know what their determination would have been like if one of our shots had gone in on Wednesday night; on Sunday (when Olympic beat South 6-0 in Sydney) they were sunk and finished as soon as the second goal went in. We're too flashy and we don't know how to handle teams who don't want to play against us."

Branko Culina in reflective mood after the midweek loss to South.

"Maybe the crowds aren't turning up because they're sick of the bullshit." John Kosmina's view of the small Brisbane crowds. Nice one Kossie!

	(Overall)							(Home)							(Away)						
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L
SYDNEY OLYMPIC	19	11	3	5	33	18	36	15	4	3	1	17	7	7	0	4	16	11			
Wollongong Wolves	19	10	5	4	39	28	35	11	7	0	2	19	12	3	5	2	20	16			
Perth Glory	18	9	5	4	33	23	32	10	6	2	2	22	14	3	3	2	11	9			
Brisbane Strikers	19	9	4	6	29	19	31	10	5	3	2	21	10	4	1	4	8	9			
Marconi	18	9	3	6	26	23	30	3	5	0	3	11	10	4	3	3	15	13			
Carlton	18	8	5	5	32	21	29	11	5	3	2	16	9	3	2	3	16	12			
Newcastle Breakers	18	8	5	5	23	23	29	0	5	3	1	16	12	3	2	4	7	11			
Parramatta Power	17	7	3	7	33	29	24	4	4	3	3	19	14	3	0	4	14	15			
South Melbourne	17	7	3	7	26	27	24	-1	6	2	1	20	7	1	1	6	6	20			
Football Kingz	17	6	5	6	31	31	23	0	2	3	2	13	15	4	2	4	18	16			
Northern Spirit	19	7	2	10	22	29	23	-7	4	1	4	11	13	3	1	6	11	16			
Adelaide Force	19	5	7	7	20	21	22	-1	4	3	2	13	9	1	4	5	7	12			
Gippsland Falcons	19	5	6	8	13	23	21	-10	3	2	4	7	9	2	4	4	6	14			
Canberra Cosmos	19	4	5	10	23	34	17	-11	2	3	5	12	13	2	2	5	11	21			
Melbourne Knights	19	4	5	10	18	35	17	-17	3	2	4	8	9	1	3	6	10	26			
Sydney United	19	3	4	12	13	30	13	-17	3	2	6	10	16	0	2	6	3	14			

Produced with the assistance of McRopod Concept Sports Systems - www.planet.net.au/~mcrpod. Note some sides have played less games than others.

Power triumphs in game of the season

PARRAMATTA POWER 4

Griffiths 10, 15, Santalab 49, Sterjovski 54.

NORTHERN SPIRIT 3

Seal 12, 51, Langdon 25.

Saturday night at Parramatta Stadium, Sydney. Crowd: 8,120



MATCH STATS:



PARRAMATTA POWER: M Gibson, R Plesa (C), J Vrkic, M Byrnes, M Santalab (J Gibson 66), S Berry, P Bennett, S Laybutt (S Eagleton 72), W

Ardone, M Sterjovski, J Griffiths (J Angelucci 76).



NORTHERN SPIRIT: J Perosh, M Bingley, L Casserly, J Sobczyk, T Cranney (M Rudan 78), P Bilokapic, M Cunico (A Saad 65), R Slater (C), D Seal, T Perinich,

M Langdon (A Griffiths 50).

Yellows:

Power: Berry 67

Spirit: Cunico 59

Best Players:

3. WALTER ARDONE (POWER)

2. David Seal (Spirit)

1. Joel Griffiths (Power)

Referee: Mark Shield

By Paul Goodwin

This game held much promise and nobody in attendance at the 'Powerhouse' was disappointed. We saw a seven goal epic in which visitors Northern Spirit clambered their way back into the game on no fewer than three occasions, but found a fourth time beyond them.

We saw a first half period of 15 minutes, ten minutes from the start, in which four of those goals were scored and incredibly a further five minute period early in the second when the rest materialised.

In between, it was a game of all-out attack by both sides, with both goals having many narrow escapes.

The game was laden with drama.

An early Parramatta goal was given, on the ruling of the assistant referee, after the ball had been hacked off the line by Matthew Langdon, but ruled to have crossed it.

We saw a Mile Sterjovski goal, which

finally decided the outcome, that Spirit players claimed had involved the use of a hand and we also saw the set piece used to perfection by the home side.

So well were those moves executed that Northern Spirit coach Graham Arnold again was forced to admit that his defenders were clueless when faced with the play.

Sadly, however, he could offer no solutions to his side's defensive deficiencies, merely saying that 'one week they follow my instructions - the next they don't!'

In front of a good crowd of just over 8,000, but which the home club had expected to be bigger, the two teams set about providing great entertainment - the kind that is sure to bring both sets of supporters back for more.

Steve Laybutt, Parramatta's Soccerroo who was making his much delayed debut, provided much steel in the midfield and was immediately into the action with a pass from Steve Berry seeing him fire just wide from close range in the sixth minute.

Power skipper Richard Plesa floated over a deep free kick, from wide on the right, in the tenth minute and when Spirit keeper John Perosh left his line to claim the ball, the lively Joel Griffiths got there first with a glancing header.

Spirit responded almost instantly.

Only two more minutes had elapsed when Luke Casserly advanced down the right and sent in a left-footed diagonal ball to the far post where David Seal directed a header at Mike Gibson's goal.

Gibson only parried the effort and Seal buried the rebound in the roof of the Parramatta net.

Spirit's relief was short-lived, however, as, from a corner on the left, in the 15th, Parramatta soon had their noses in front again.

Michael Santalab put over the flag kick and that man again, Griffiths, out-jumped his marker to head past Perosh. Langdon, stationed on the line, hooked it away, but referee Mark Shield glanced at his assistant who signalled a goal.

The visitors again took up the challenge and launched another assault on the Parramatta goal.

Within ten minutes, Troy Cranney had made good progress down the left and fed Langdon who cut in and sent a low drive from a tight angle towards the far post.

Seal at the near post did enough to put Gibson off by attempting to flick it past him, but did not appear to get a touch and Spirit were level again, much to the delight of their large and vocal group of supporters in the Eastern Stand.

Parramatta almost regained the lead in the shadows of half time.

Steve Berry's volley after yet another flick on from Griffiths looked goal-bound, but took a deflection onto the crossbar from a defender and all the home side won that time was a corner.

Mile Sterjovski also came close to adding to the tally in the 44th, arriving too late to turn in a good through pass by the brilliantly effective Walter Ardone.

Ardone illustrated his worth to the



Joel Griffiths: must be knocking on the door of Olyroo selection after another class striker's performance.

seemed undaunted by seeing their lead eroded yet again and were able to regain the lead once more in the 54th.

Ardone's corner from the right arrived in the centre and after both Berry and Laybutt had headers partially cleared the ball fell to Sterjovski who could not really miss from point blank range.

The only question mark was whether he had first controlled the high bouncing ball with a hand, before despatching into a gaping net.

The last half hour was a repeat of the first part of the half with chances galore for both sides, but no further goals.

Spirit lost Langdon who had been unwell before the game and pulled out soon after the restart, losing one of their more effective weapons, but as the game drew to a close it was probably Parramatta who had the most chances to add to their score.

While a draw would have been a fair result, Parramatta is really firing at present and the win was an indication that they are heading in the right direction - full pelt towards the top six.

Northern Spirit's campaign may not be completely over, but this was a setback after some good recent showings.

On the positive side, Seal is finally showing some confidence and fitness in and around the penalty area, which his coach acknowledged after the game.

Once Perinich also gets going in earnest, this combination could prove lethal.

Arnold's main concern now will be with his defence which has conceded seven goals in their last three outings.

It would seem that height alone is not enough and the worry that Graham Arnold's opposite number David Mitchell had about his own attack's lack of height may not be such a concern after this outcome.



David Seal: the good news for Spirit is that he is back in form.



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side, still further, in the 49th.

His free kick from wide on the right was headed home by tall defender Santalab, apparently unchallenged inside the Spirit area.

Was this the end for Spirit? No, it certainly was not!

Having fallen behind yet again they again took only two minutes to reply, getting three goals in a game for the second time inside three days, having beaten Carlton 3-2 at home on the Wednesday.

The Spirit free kick from the right by Casserly was good enough to arrive at the far post unchallenged and Seal snatched his second goal with a fine, precision stooping header.

Parramatta, who had scored four themselves in their previous home game,

Socceroo Cardozo ensures vital Olympic win

CARLTON 0

SYDNEY OLYMPIC 1

Pablo Cardozo 73

Saturday night at Olympic Park, Melbourne. Crowd 2,334.



MATCH STATS:

CARLTON SC: Anastasiadis; Azzopardi, McPherson, Atkinson, Marth, Slater, Thompson, Terminello (Anthopoulos 76), Lapsansky, Moreira (Martin 81), Kennedy



(Conroy 76)



SYDNEY OLYMPIC: Olympic: Bouhoutsos; Zorocich, Baillie, Juric, Sinovic, Thomas, Phillips, Wilson, Mendez (Kalantzis 81), Cardozo, Arambasic (Tome 46).

Yellows:
Olympic: Mendez 20, Phillips 59

Best Players:

3. BAILLIE (OLYMPIC)
2. Lapsansky (Carl)
1. Mendez (Olympic)

Referee: Simon Micallef

By Kevin Christopher

Sydney Olympic took a giant step in their quest for league leadership with a gutsy 1-0 win over Carlton at Olympic Park on Saturday night.

Although the match was billed as 2nd v 3rd, both teams could boast just one win in their past five games and unfortunately the match reflected the recent form of the combatants rather than their league positions.

The loss places enormous pressure on the Blues' hopes of a top two finish and the poor public response to a switch of matchday gave the administrators further cause for concern.

Complicating matters, key defender Sean Douglas has returned from international duty nursing a broken wrist which will keep him sidelined for approximately six weeks, but with Steve Horvat set to sign with the Blues, Douglas' absence should be bearable.

Olympic weren't without their selection problems either, with Brett Emerton succumbing to "a bad knock" sustained midweek at South Melbourne, but the inclusion of Baillie and Phillips provided the extra cover which ultimately proved decisive.

The most interesting addition to the teamsheets however was Joshua Kennedy, a VIS graduate who earned a silver medal with the Joeys last year. A tall, rangy striker, he showed enough to suggest he will be quite a handful once he gets twenty or thirty NSL games under his belt.

The scene was set for a heavyweight clash but neither side truly lived up to their status. Carlton dominated the match the further it went, with Olympic firing their best shots in the early part of the game, yet neither goalkeeper was ever in danger

of exhaustion

Arambasic and Cardozo both called Anastasiadis into play in the opening ten minutes, although the best chance came at the other end when Thompson put Kennedy through only to see Baillie produce a desperate saving tackle as the ex-Joeys shaped to shoot.

Andrew Marth put a header over the bar after a neat flick-on from a corner, while Kennedy produced an excellent looping header from a Lapsansky free kick which required Olympic 'keeper George Bouhoutsos to execute the save of the night, a flying save high to his left.

As usual Lapsansky was the centre of attention at set pieces but Pablo Cardozo proved he can also hit a ball with a dipping free kick causing Anastasiadis some anxious moments.

For all the huffing and puffing of both teams the match remained goal less at half time with one of the more memorable moments perhaps being the appearance of a large banner which read 'Nobody Screws Soccer Like 7'.

Olympic coach Branko Culina introduced Norman Tome for Arambasic at the break and the pacy striker was quickly into the game, earning a free kick at the side of the eighteen yard box. Gabriel Mendez stepped up and delivered a delightful ball towards Scott Baillie who made solid contact but his header flashed wide of the upright when he should have forced Anastasiadis to save.

Mendez then produced a dazzling solo run through the Carlton defence and fired a low shot from ten metres which Anastasiadis did well to smother. But Mendez had the quickness of mind to launch himself horizontally and head the

"You see what happens in Australia when you ask teams to play three games in six days. Tonight we played pretty ordinary and we were lucky enough to have a chance and take it. I wouldn't read into tonight's game too much, both teams are capable of better."

Branko Culina's post match analysis.

ball back into the danger area, where Terminello's attempted clearance ricocheted off the back of a Sydney player and almost produced the most bizarre goal of the season.

The breakthrough came when Marcus Phillips received the ball out wide on the left, David McPherson was unable to cut out the cross and Cardozo managed to break free and glance an unmarked header into the far corner.

Carlton finished the better side and history looked like repeating itself yet again when Andrew Marth rose high late in the game to get on the end of a Lapsansky free kick, but his header went just wide.

After the match Branko Culina pulled no punches when offering an explanation for his side's flat display.

"You see what happens in Australia when you ask teams to play three games



New Socceroo Pablo Cardozo shipped in late to finish off the game with a nicely taken header

in six days. Tonight we played pretty ordinary and we were lucky enough to have a chance and take it. I wouldn't read into tonight's game too much, both teams are capable of better."

Stuart Munro on the other hand may have pin-pointed why his team have found themselves in a mid-season slump.

"I thought we went wrong in areas where players tried to overdo things, didn't do the most simple, the most damaging thing. Players tried to show how good they were when it wasn't necessary.

Sometimes when you have skilful players like Stuart Slater and Archie Thompson and Lupo Lapsansky, they've got to realise that they can't just be a five minute player. You've got to be able to produce on a more consistent basis.

"Admittedly Stuart hasn't had a lot of football recently, but we need to get more from him, and one way of doing that is by doing things a little bit quicker and not trying to overdo it.

"At the moment I think these players are overdoing it and trying to show what good players they are when, really, you've got to get back to the basics of keeping possession of the ball. Trying to hurt teams rather than trying to show how good they are as individuals."

The Blues' coach was more upbeat when discussing the performance of his debutant however.

"I thought Josh did very, very well. Josh had a terrific game and I think the rest of the players have got to look at themselves and think of the job a seventeen year old did for the team tonight."

It's now up to the senior players to lift and try and secure a win to keep the frontrunners in sight, as Munro is only too aware

"We've got to try and get a result every game. There are certain things I'm going to have to look at seriously this week. I just feel I can get an awful lot more out of the players I've got."

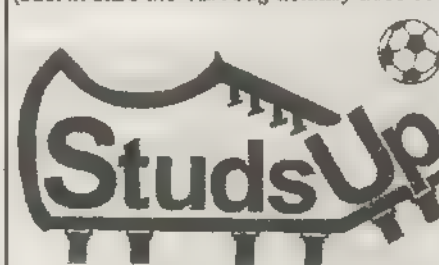
Finally, mention should be made of

referee Simon Micallef and his assistants Senko Rastovic and Carlo Graser. Too often this season the post-match press conferences have centred around the antics of the match officials.

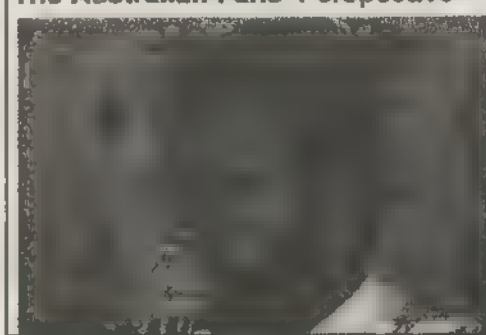
It was therefore significant that for once neither coach felt the need to discuss their performances. So credit where it is due.

Well done to the men in bright yellow.

SU44 - The Millenium Issue
(Just in case the Y2K bug actually does something)



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Kingz momentum halted by profligate Strikers

BRISBANE STRIKERS 3

McLaren 2', Baldwin 28', Hews 4.

FOOTBALL KINGZ 1

Riddle 63'.

Saturday night at Suncorp Metway Stadium, Sydney. Crowd: 2,562.



MATCH STATS:



BRISBANE STRIKERS:

1. Bolton, 2. Gwynne, 6. Ditton (5. Bell 68'), 11. Hews, 12. Dwyer (8. Pilic 72'), 13. McLaren, 14. North, 15. Battistin, 16. Grierson, 18. Meredith (10. Srhoj 85'), 19. Baldwin.



FOOTBALL KINGZ - 1.

Utting, 2. Bunce, 5. Perry (18. Riddle 45'), 8. Jackson, 11. Middleby, 12. Ngata, 13. Osman, 15. Vicelich, 16. Jones, 17. Elrick (3. Van Steeden), 22. Silva. Sub Not Used, 7. Rufer.

Yellows:

Brisbane: Meredith 84'
Kingz: Jones 52', Middleby 61', Jackson 69', van Steeden 89'

Best Players:

1. NICK MEREDITH (BRISBANE)
2. Stuart McLaren (Brisbane)
3. Levent Osman (Kingz)

Referee: Brett Hugo

By Cameron Atfield

The Brisbane Strikers leapfrogged into third place on the NSL table, for at least 24 hours, after their emphatic victory over New Zealand's Kingz FC at Suncorp Metway Stadium on Saturday night.

The win ended Brisbane's three-game losing streak, and was never really in doubt after Strikers skipper Stuart McLaren scored after just one-and-a-half minutes.

In the first attack on the Kingz goal, McLaren headed a Nick Meredith cross past keeper Mike Utting with apparent ease.

Conceding such an early goal would have been quite a psychological blow for the Kingz, but they refused to lie down and had a chance three minutes later.

Harry Ngata, who had previous NSL experience with the old Brunswick Juventus, sent a long-range free kick into the Strikers box. The ball looped around in the air and in the end, Clint Bolton did well to palm the ball over his crossbar.

Bolton's opposite number had a similar scare just before the 20-minute mark, when a mis-timed McLaren cross threatened to sneak into the top right corner of his goal. Utting did well to run backwards and catch the ball.

Peter Grierson should have doubled the Strikers' lead after latching onto a Chay Hews cross. Grierson was allowed an eternity to line up his shot, but in the end Utting did well to save the shot and palm it off to his left.

The second goal threatened by the Strikers for so long finally arrived in the 28th minute - and what a great goal it was.

Wade Baldwin broke his scoring duck when he got on the end of a fantastic counter-attack from deep in the Kingz'

half. Meredith's precision through-ball found Hews in space, who in turn sent in the cross for Baldwin to fire in the goal.

The Kingz' Levent Osman, a former Gippsland player, tested Bolton five minutes from half time with a powerful long-range effort from 35m out. The newly-appointed Soccerroo goalkeeper did well to save.

The game was put beyond doubt



three minutes into the second stanza when Hews, recently returned from a stint with Japanese club Bellmare Hiratsuka, scored a cracker of a goal from well outside the box.

He showed great controlling skills to chest the ball to his right foot and let it rip, leaving Utting no chance to save.

The Strikers should have consolidated their lead through Baldwin after a Peter Dwyer chip rebounded off the post. It fell nicely to Baldwin, who in turn blasted the shot wide. No doubt he will be having nightmares about that miss for some time to come.

This chance came after attempts by Dwyer (54th minute) and Baldwin (55th) which they should have done better with.

The Kingz had their share of chances too, most notably through Australian "import" Robert Middleby, who latched on to a clever Osman back-heel, but his close-range shot sailed over the bar.

They did manage to pull one back in the 68th minute through substitute Stu Riddle after a mistake by the otherwise reliable Bolton.

When the Strikers keeper failed to hold a cross, it fell nicely to Riddle. He was given a lot of time on the ball and had no trouble lining the shot past Bolton.

From that moment, the Kingz seemed to be revitalised and threatened the Strikers defence on numerous occasions. But in the lead-up to full time, it was

the Strikers who had the better of the chances.

Hews' shot in the 83rd minute certainly got the crowd excited. A nifty Grierson back-heel found Meredith in space, who was able to line up the cross from near the sideline. Hews' shot hit the side netting, leading many in the disappointing 2562 crowd to think it was in.

Hews had another two chances in injury time. The first of these chances, a powerful shot from outside the area, ricocheted off the Kingz defence to safety.

He then missed an absolute sitter after a Grierson through-ball put him one-on-one with the keeper. Much to the disappointment of coach John Kosmina, his shot sailed over the bar.

"I'm happy with the win - but if you make that many chances, you've got to start putting them away," Kosmina said.

"It was nice to get three goals but I'm not happy about the ones we missed. We had too many good chances we didn't convert. At 3-0 we should have buried them."

"It was fortunate that we scored early because Auckland had us under a fair bit of pressure. I think [the Kingz] were great the whole game - they did not stop."

Kingz player/coach Wynton Rufer, Oceania's Player of the Century, was philosophical about the loss.

"I didn't think we had the will or desire to get back in there after being 3-0 down, but for us it's a good learning curve for the players coming off a few good results."

"It's another level for us and we have to learn to be aggressive week in and week out. Most of these boys have never played professional football before, and I think, looking at the big picture, if the New Zealand game can develop it will only help Oceania gain a direct entry into the World Cup."

"Australia is obviously leaps and bounds ahead of the other Oceania countries, and as long as there is only one strong nation in Oceania, FIFA won't allow direct qualification. You're helping us (NZ), and hopefully we can return the favour and make Oceania more competitive," he said.

Both Rufer and Kosmina have been dogged by off-field turmoil within their clubs in recent times, and a frustrated Kosmina suggested Brisbane's poor crowds this season could have been a determining factor.

"Maybe the crowds aren't turning up because they're sick of the bullshit," he said.

"People always talk about the players being affected by it, but maybe the crowds are more affected. It isn't the first time it's happened, is it?"

"Every year something goes on and maybe they're just fed up with the whole thing."

Rufer has had similar struggles to deal with, but said his only concern was how the team performed on the park.

"The Kingz are the best thing to happen to the game in New Zealand, he said."

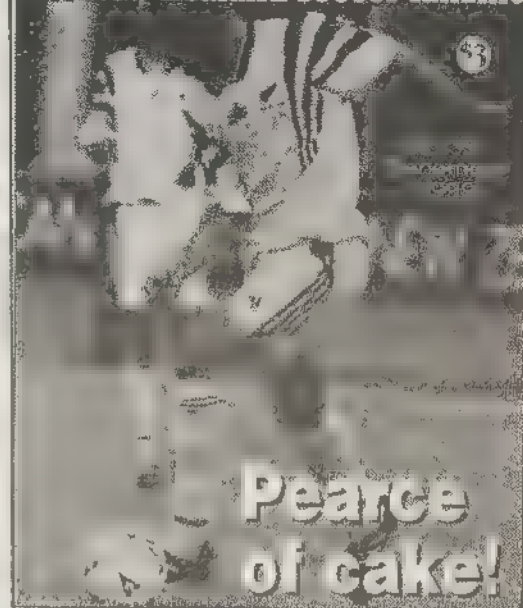


Man of the match Nick Meredith

"With a bit of luck we might be able to get our act sorted out off the field and next year we can challenge for the six. It can only get better."

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PJ Roberts the star in tame draw

CANBERRA COSMOS 1

Gonzalez 45.

GIPPSLAND FALCONS 1

MacNicol 44.

Friday night at Bruce Stadium, Canberra. Crowd: 1,847.



MATCH STATS:

Canberra Cosmos:

Konstantinou, Burt, Polak (Purdue 84), Winnie, Arranz, Hamilton, James (Howarth 76), Hooker, Roberts De Jesus, Gonzalez (Prenzoski 76).



Gippsland Falcons:

Jevdjovic, Fak, Gotis, Durakovic, MacNicol, Puca, Robertson (Savage 79), Hutchison, Kakos (Katz 83), Marcina, Nilo.



Yellows:

Cosmos: Winnie 86

Best Players:

3: ROBERTS (COSMOS)

2: Polak (Cosmos)

1: MacNicol (Falcons)

Referee: Matthew Breeze

to forget, the Cosmos came out fighting and created so many chances, the ball rarely left the Gippsland half.

Unfortunately, the need for a true striker has become more and more apparent as clear-cut opportunities to win a game are being squandered week in and week out.

Such was the domination that the Falcons only shot on target was the one that netted them the goal. Lest to say that Bojo Jevdjovic didn't have to do much to do as the Cosmos attackers couldn't find the space between the sticks.

Within the first five minutes, the home side could have been as much as two up. Danny Burt couldn't connect with a looping free-kick from Ivo De Jesus and a minute later PJ Roberts mis-directed his header away from goal after Harry James sent a cross over the defence.

The rare time that Gippsland were able to cause problems was when the ball came in from MacNicol's side.

Although Gippsland's finishing wasn't much up to standard like the Cosmos, the home defenders seemed to want to provide the opportunities for their opponents.

Both Peter Kakos and Juan Nilo

sed Mehmed Durakovic and set him up, but Gonzalez's shot went straight at the keeper.

With the clock just ticking past the 45 minute mark, the game exploded for just a few short minutes. A loose pass fell to MacNicol just outside the box. He weaved and turned and eventually beat Robert Hooker. Seeing Angelo Konstantinou well off his line he chipped the young keeper to give his side an unexpected lead.

The Cosmos were spurred into action and when there was a scramble at the other end, the referee adjudged that Durakovic had handled inside the "D" just outside the box. Gonzalez rifled his shot into the top right corner, giving Jevdjovic no chance, to level the scores.

Alike two days before the Cosmos came out fighting in the second half, a completely new side. With the Falcons players starting to tire following their game also only 48 hours before, it became all one-way traffic.

The Cosmos should have taken the lead after just 3 minutes. Brian Hamilton spotted James free inside the box and delivered an inch-perfect pass. James settled, but then shot straight at the keeper.

Three more minutes and it was PJ Roberts' turn to miss after Jason Polak chipped a ball to him, although his was a much harder opportunity than James'.

One by one the Cosmos lined up for shooting practice, something I guess will be on coach Tom Sermanni's mind come the next training session.

Gonzalez muffed his shot after De Jesus put him in. Two De Jesus corner kicks saw first Polak shoot over and then Roberts volley wide.

Polak had another chance at the midway stage of the half when a Gonzalez ball saw a defender and the keeper get tangled, but Jason's toe-poke went just wide.

Substitute Ilija Prenzoski then had a stinging shot blocked by a defender who used both arms to protect his body, but it was missed by the officials.

With under ten minutes left, De Jesus should have done better when he caught the defence out thinking he was offside, although Durakovic was lying on the ground in front of him. He rounded the injured defender and then broke into the box, but a great save from Jevdjovic saved the day.

Gippsland had one more chance to spoil the party into time added on when a Puca free-kick found Nilo, but his header calmly floated over the bar.

At the other end a long ball from Danny Burt found Prenzoski and his cut in went to Roberts. The shot took the slightest of deflections, but it was enough to redirect it just over the bar.

And thus, alike two days before the home team had dominated, kept the small crowd on the edge of their seats, yet could only come away with just one point.

A relieved and somewhat happy Falcons coach Jeff Hopkins said, "I was proud at the way the lads stuck at it. We stood up to them." Hopkins admitted that the game only 48 hours earlier on a heavy pitch had caught up with the players in the second half.

Sermanni stated that the first half



was "pretty dismal" yet he was extremely happy with the way his team had fought in the second. "On the chances we deserved to win the game. If you keep creating chances like that then I think the goals will come".

Sermanni added with regard to the beginning of the game that "I'd like us to play with more composure and fire in the first half. We seem to wait to get into the game."



By Nick Guoth

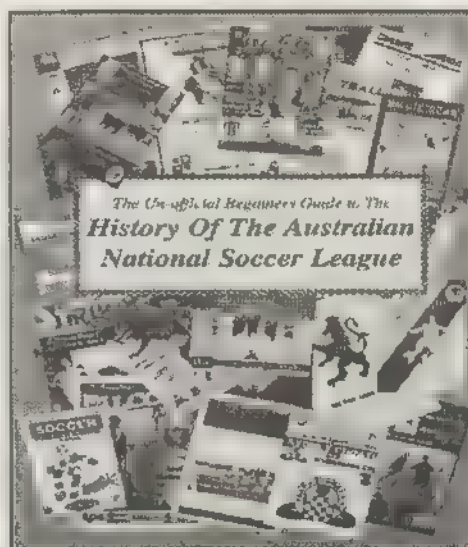
The Canberra Cosmos tied their franchise record of 4 undefeated games in a row following a 1-1 draw with the Gippsland Falcons last Friday night at Bruce Stadium, yet they would be the last to be happy with the result.

After a first half everyone would like

should have done better when given the ball in front of goal, but they just weren't adept at punishing poor defending.

At the other end the defence of Manny Gotis and Dean Fak held firm as the Cosmos tried to penetrate, especially from the wings.

Gaby Gonzalez had a great chance after 36 minutes when PJ Roberts dispos-



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Petkovic shows why he is rated so highly

PERTH GLORY 2

Buljan 34, Edwards 63

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 1

Chipperfield 86

Sunday night at Perth Oval, Perth. Crowd: 9,657



MATCH STATS:



PERTH GLORY:

Petkovic, Trajkovski, Harnwell, Valle, Naven, Miller, Carbone (Faria 82), Edgar, Afkos, Edwards, Buljan.



WOLLONGONG WOLVES:

Pogliacomi, Masi, Souris (Lahanas 78), Young, Cervinski, Surjan (Harlock 78), Spencer (Huxley 67), Stanton, Ceccoli, Stanton, Ceccoli.

Chipperfield, Horsley.

Yellows:

Glory: Harnwell 44.

Reds:

Wolves: Masi 51

Best Players:

3. JASON PETKOVIC (GLORY)

2. Alistair Edwards (Glory)

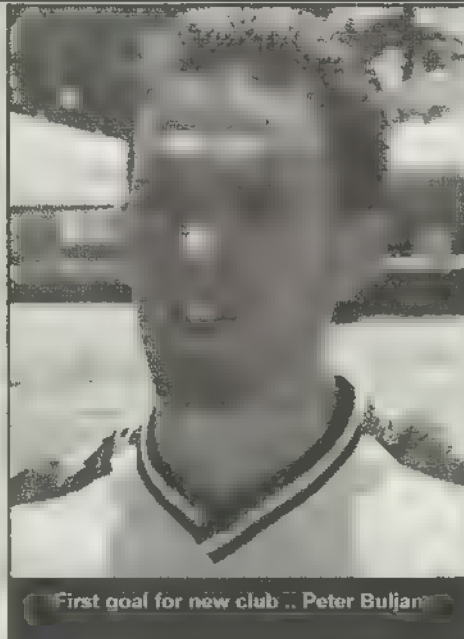
1. Rob Trajkovski (Glory)

Referee: Gerry Connolly

By Dennis Gedling

An undermanned Perth Glory showed spirit and determination after a slow start to defeat second placed Wollongong at Perth Oval.

The wet conditions failed to dampen the spirits of the very vocal but small crowd of 9,657 which had some very nervous moments in stoppage time. With the visiting side having snatched a goal back stormed home but were denied a point by some brilliant keeping by Jason Petkovic.



First goal for new club - Peter Buljan

Peter Buljan and Alistair Edwards notched the goals for the home side with slow starter Scott Chipperfield nailing the late one for the Wolves.

Glory went into this match barely having enough players to field a side.

Dion Valle was recalled to defence whilst two new players made their squad debut. AIS player Ljubo Milicevic and young West Australian (signed on loan for a month from Fremantle City) Gary Faria were called up, whilst Tony Franken was also in.

Wollongong went into this game on the back of a 5-2 drubbing away to Sydney United - their confidence was high against a Perth side coming off an absolute caning in New Zealand where once again the short fuse of many Glory players was there for all to see.

Wollongong was the first to take hold on the match surging forward in the first 10 minutes Masi made a brave run at

goal thanks to a great through ball from the midfield but Petkovic made sure his weak shot went out for a corner.

Glory sat back and let the Wolves take the game to them in the first half hour, quite content to pass the ball around and not make too many attacking runs.

Alvin Ceccoli headed just wide after 13 minutes and Petkovic soon pulled off the first of many great saves.

Slowly Glory lifted and got into the match, Scott Miller and Robert Trajkovski started to win balls on the wings and the very young midfield starting to cope with the likes of Chipperfield and Anthony Surjan.

Glory had a golden opportunity in the 30th minute when Buljan was given a great pass by Carbone to take on a defender but he held the ball up and passed the ball to another player who lost possession.

After 32 minutes John Carbone shot wide but six minutes before the break Buljan scored his first goal for the Perth.

Another top cross by Trajkovski found Edwards outside the area, the former Socceroo was then tackled but the ball rolled to Buljan who shook off two defenders and spun around to lift the ball into the keeper's top left corner.

He showed obvious jubilation when he didn't know what part of the ground to run to celebrate.

Wollongong awoke from their slumber in the final five minutes of the half but couldn't penetrate the solid Glory defence.

In the second half Wolves started strongly but were soon reduced to ten men after 54 minutes when Esala Masi and Miller clashed with the Wolf collecting his second booking and making his only mark on the game by being sent off.

Midway through the second half Chipperfield, who was moved up front, started finally making an impact, his pace troubling the Glory defence.

After 63 minutes Wollongong had a golden opportunity to equalise, shots from three different players being saved brilliantly each time by Petkovic, the keeper parrying away shots that would have beaten most.

The most amazing save was when Petkovic saved a shot from Chipperfield - denying the striker a certain goal. Glory somehow cleared through Valle, who played superbly.

The purple shirts counter-attacked which gave Buljan a golden one-on-one chance with the Wolves' keeper but his shot deflected off the keeper's leg.

Glory then made the Wolves pay for not making their dominance count. After 65 minutes a poor clearance and deflection gave Trajkovski a chance to break - he crossed perfectly to Edwards who easily headed the ball into the goal.

In the 67th minute David Huxley came on for a tiring Noel Spencer and he gave the visiting side some more vigor, setting up Chipperfield twice but Gareth Naven's tackling was second to none.

The final substitutions were made for the Wolves on 78 minutes, Neil Harlock and Peter Lahanas relieving Surjan and Souris.

In the 82nd minute Faria made his debut for a fatigued Carbone - Carbone playing the game of his life like many other young hometown players.

Perth seemed to be heading for a comfortable win after a shaky start but Wollongong were soon back in the hunt.

A hopeful long ball (the story of Wollongong's second half) caught the home defence half asleep. Chipperfield found himself one-on-one with Petkovic running out from his line to try and save



Jason Petkovic - man of the match

the ball, but he missed the ball completely and a very soft goal resulted.

Wollongong suddenly found heart and threw players forward which soon troubled the Glory backline.

Chipperfield again outpaced the tired Glory defence finding himself with just Petkovic to beat but once again Petkovic saved - the loose ball fell to Young but he was denied by another brilliant save by the Glory keeper.

Perth suddenly decided they should try defending and cleared the ball but the Wolves came at the Stange-coached side again soon after.

Last gasp defending by the home side denied the former league leaders until the final whistle.

The relief was evident with the fans who cheered like the game was a sellout and the WA team came away with the three points after a hard fought team victory.

After the match Glory coach Bernd Stange said that is was exactly what he wanted from his team.

"We played it safe and used the counter attack, we needed time to settle in the first half. Our passion and attitude was important and we had plenty of that."

Nick Theodorakopoulos was philosophical about the defeat saying his team had more chances but it's always the team that scores the goals that wins the match; he was worried about his injuries and suspension mounting with Masi's sending off compounding his problems.

Buljan said he was happy to just play a full 90 minutes and he also admitted he prefers his left foot, his right side still a tad tender from ankle and thigh injuries.

Perth had many stars - the leadership of Edwards and Naven, plus the extra effort by the likes of Edgar (who improves every week), Jamie Harnwell and Miller gave them much-needed confidence after the New Zealand debacle.

Special praise must be made for Trajkovski and Petkovic who had stellar games the latter making vital saves.

Wollongong would feel hard done by after dominating long periods of the game but really never capitalised on the chances given to them.

Chipperfield (after he was moved into attack), Matt Horsley and Surjan gave the Glory headaches but like the home side, theirs was a team effort.

Glory now travel to face Marconi in a tough match next Sunday.

Understatement of the season must go to Perth debutante Greg Faria who, when asked what he thought about running on to a standing ovation in his first NSL match he simply said "Yeah it was ok I guess."

Don't count Glory out of top spot yet and the way Wollongong performed today, their top two chances are more than alive.

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South win but Breakers also show class

SOUTH MELBOURNE 2

Lozanovski 65, Curcija 94

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS 0

Sunday night at Bob Jane Stadium, Melbourne. Crowd: 7,458.



MATCH STATS:



SOUTH MELBOURNE:

Jones, Blatsis, Liparoti
Iosifidis, Goutzoulis,
Vlahos (Tsekis 80),
Panopoulos (Alagich
63), Lozanovski,
Trimboli (c),
Anastasiadis (Coveny 63), Curcija.

Anastasiadis (Coveny 63), Curcija.



NEWCASTLE BREAKERS:

Catlin,
McManus, Pryce,
Moore, Wilson,
Trpceviski (Dodd 63),
Roberts, Sprod,
Wieczorek (Tancheski 78),
Buonavoglia, Harper. Sub not used:
Owens.

Wieczorek (Tancheski 78),
Buonavoglia, Harper. Sub not used:
Owens.

Yellows:

South: Lozanovski (38), Vlahos (57).
Breakers: Wilson (66), McManus (89).

Best Players:

3. TRIMBOLI (SOUTH)
2. Buonavoglia (Breakers)
1. Vlahos (South)

Referee: David Dwight

By Alan Clark

Goran Lozanovski turned from villain to hero in the blink of an eye when he scored the opening goal of the game for South Melbourne against Newcastle Breakers midway through the second half at the time when most in the crowd were baying for his substitution after a dismal first half.

Lozanovski, on song, has a bag-full of tricks to bewilder his hapless marker, but until his goal, nothing was working for him. At one point, with the ball at his feet, he and team-mate Steve Panopoulos collided with no Breakers player within tackling range.

But supporters' memories are notoriously short, and when Lozanovski hammered home his grass-cutting shot from the edge of the penalty area after Andy Vlahos sent in a sweet cross for Michael Curcija to lay-off in his direction, he was instantly re-adopted by the home support.

Indeed, but for the finger-tips of veteran Breakers' goalkeeper Bob Catlin, the trio would have had an action replay just eleven minutes later. Vlahos sent in a deep diagonal cross to Curcija who again laid-off for the fast-arriving Lozanovski whose cracking shot from fully 30 metres was headed for the top corner but for Catlin's spectacular save.

Thankfully, South Melbourne coach Ange Postecoglou had never considered substituting Lozanovski, "Goran struggled, especially in the first half, but he's a quality player. You leave him on because with one moment of magic he can open a game. He's not the type of player I think about pulling off."

Lee Sterrey, coach of the Breakers,

was disappointed that despite having Lozanovski shackled for most of the match, a moment's inattention following a triple substitution, left Lozanovski with room to spare.

"I think we were in the match for a long (while)," he said. "I thought we handled the situation quite well. There were three subs made and from a throw in, it gets switched across to Lozanovski - it just can't happen. People were asleep."

Until then the game seemed to be heading towards stalemate, with neither side able to put together moves of any fluency.

Newcastle played on the break with most of the hard-running being made by John Buonavoglia who, although often getting into threatening positions, usually found his support trailing, and facing too many of South's huge defenders.

The experienced Andy Harper was also able to gain good ground and hold the ball up, but South's defence was scarcely troubled. Chris Jones was only infrequently called into action.

Perversely, Breakers' best moments came in the final ten minutes when the equaliser would not have surprised, but in the end conceded a second goal, deep into added time, to leave Bob Jane Stadium with a scoreline that indicated a more comprehensive win for South than was actually the case.

Kiwi Vaughan Coveny, coming on as one of the triple substitution as a direct swap for John Anastasiadis, had a shot from distance three minutes from the end of regulation time which beat Catlin, but cannoned off the post.

That was about the only South attacking move in a sustained period of Breakers' pressure in which the best move came when Andy Harper, after a pin-point cross from Glenn Sprod, headed just over from eight metres when a goal seemed more likely.

Just a few minutes earlier, Harper elected to cut a ball back rather than turn and shoot which would have been Sterrey's preference.

Showing ambition, Sterrey had brought on Chris Tancheski for Brad Wieczorek with twelve minutes to go, pushing Tancheski into a more attacking position, enlivening Breakers' forward line.

"I was disappointed with our last ten minutes - we almost allowed Newcastle back into it when we should have worried about the three points," said Postecoglou.

"The game should have been over at one-nil. We did some silly things in the last ten minutes. We're not sitting on top of the ladder, trying to put on a show for people - we've got to be about winning points," said Postecoglou.

As if to ensure the ball was played as far away from his goal as possible, and make it harder for Breakers' strong finish to earn the equaliser, Jones let fly a bombing clearance.

Both Breakers' tall central defenders, Todd McManus and Glenn Moore, converged, spoiling each other and leaving Curcija with a free header to loop over the by now stranded Catlin, to sew up the game.

It was a moment neither McManus



Andy Vlahos looks like it will serve South very well.

nor Moore nor deserved as they had been resolute at the back for the Breakers, and for the majority of the match had the better of South's attack.

Sterrey praised the pair, despite that unfortunate incident, "Up until that moment, I thought they handled South's quality strikers well."

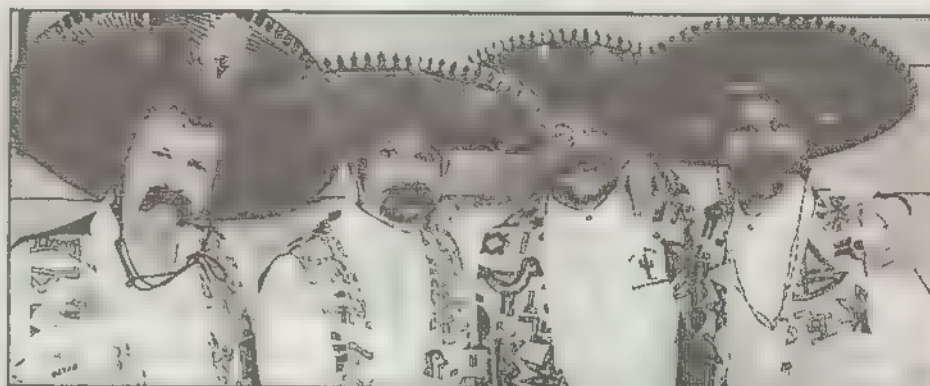
Indeed, the game was mostly a mid-field battle for the first-half, neither side able to make a move of penetration, and meaning the defending outfielders kept the ball from reaching their teams' respective goalkeepers.

What attacks there were mostly arose from breakaways, with Buonavoglia's running setting tests for the South defence, which were generally

passed as the diminutive speedster was manoeuvred into unproductive parts of the pitch.

Both teams seemed keener to avoid defeat than risk the win during the first half, but with the substitutions midway through the second came the spark that ignited both sides' ambitions.

"We've got (South) four times (this) year and we strike them when they're back (from Brazil) and they've got their minds on the job. I wish I drew them before they went to Rio, but these things happen," said a rueful Sterrey.



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New coach Petkovic starts with a draw



SYDNEY UNITED 1

Usljebrka 2.

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 1

Cervinski 89.

Sunday night at Sydney United Sports Centre Sydney. Crowd 3,098.

MATCH STATS:



SYDNEY UNITED: Hughes, Bosnar, Maric, Palapanis, J Moric, Rastall, Arrarte, Genc, Pondeljak (Younis 84), Jermen (Bosevski 68), Usljebrka (Junli 66)



MELBOURNE KNIGHTS: John, Rajher (Reda 67), Kovacevic, Vukadin, Silic, Urlovic (Kelic 66), Murtala

Abbas (Rados 80), Kiratzoglou, Susa, Cervinski, Vargas.

Yellow:

United: Jermen 23, Palapanis 53, Rastall 57, Hughes 89
Knights: Kelic 87.

Best Players:

3. HUGHES (UNITED)
2. Genc (United)
1. Susa (Knights)

Referee: Eddie Lennie

By Steve Oldridge

Whilst it may have been a bottom of the table clash both teams provided the crowd with end to end attacking football.

Two minutes into the first half a brilliant dummy by Mario Jermen left the Knights defenders flat-footed and allowed United's Zvonko Usljebrka to score his first goal since joining the club with a stinging left footer that gave the keeper no chance of stopping.

With his first goal in the memory bank Usljebrka clearly decided that it wouldn't be his last and combined with the ever-exciting Tom Pondeljak a number of opportunities, only to be let down with the final pass.

Whilst United pumped out the long



Olyroo Zeljko Susa impressed for the visitors to Edensor Park

balls from Eddy Bosnar the Knights retaliated with clever build ups through the defence with a short ball game with Zeljko Susa leading the way laying on quality balls for the strikers.

Brett Hughes produced some superb saves - easily playing his best game of the year - to deny the Knights a number of occasions.

Throughout the game Aytec Genc dominated the midfield and appeared to be free to play his natural game one of skill and thought.

Both teams were guilty of silly niggling tactics giving away fouls close to their own goal, however most of the free kicks missed the target.

In the 40th minute Bosnar once again proved his value to the club putting his body on the line to save what surely would have been a goal to the Knights' Susa, shortly after that Bosnar was once again on hand to amend an error in defence by United's Tom Maric.

The second half began with the Knights producing a clear opportunity when a clever build up from Roddy Vargas, Jason Vukadin and Ivan Kelic but again the finishing was poor.

In response United's Pondeljak again found space but unfortunately for

this player his exceptional speed and ability to find a space is not being utilised by his team mates.

Whilst United attacked at every opportunity the Knights had the majority of shots on goal however Hughes was in complete control at all times.

At the 30min mark of the second half it was Genc who had the crowd on their feet after an inspired run down the right hand side and a delightful cross that beat the keeper, but with no United player in sight, this opportunity was wasted.

United made their first two of three substitutes in the 77th minute bringing on Bosevski for Jermen and Younis for Usljebrka (who had run himself into the ground)

Bosevski made an immediate impact combining with Pondeljak with a number of attacking raids against the now tired Knights defence.

Bosevski, who frequently plays off the bench, again proved that he deserves to be a game starter and produced a cracking 35 yard shot that, whilst slightly



Aytec Genc showed attacking prowess in the first half



they will continue to be a thorn in the side of the top teams and are simply not making up the numbers.

A win for United just wasn't to be - as has been the case all year the United boys allowed a late goal in.

In the 92nd minute Adrian Cervinski latched onto the ball bouncing his way in a crowded goal area after Sydney United's goalkeeper Brett Hughes jumped to catch a cross but was impeded in his attempt.

Sydney's cries for a free kick to be awarded to United fell on deaf ears as referee Eddie Lennie awarded the goal.

United's best player was Hughes who stopped two certain goals with reflex saves. The first one just before the break was a shot from close range by Cervinski and the other was a Kelic header in the 63rd minute

Both Genc and Susa were creative in midfield and were their team's best attacking options



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off target, showed great belief in his own ability.

The remaining 20 minutes of the game was an intense, physical battle, hard but fair football would be a good way to describe it.

There was little time for slow build ups and the long ball came into play with a number of opportunities resulting.

The best chance fell to the Knights' Susa, who had a great game, but he missed the simplest of opportunities.

With that miss the United lads rallied and within seconds were back on the attack looking to wrap up the game with a win for new coach Ivan Petkovic.

At the 91st minute Genc was brought down in the box but referee Lennie allowed play to continue.

For two teams lying at the bottom of the league both showed that

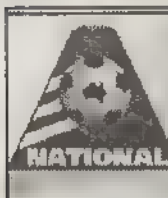
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The Carlton Fanzine

Sean Babic's late goal saves Marconi



ADELAIDE CITY FORCE 2

Pelosi 15, Sabljak 20

MARCONI STALLIONS 2

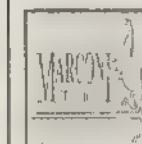
Care 5, Babic S. 85

Sunday night at Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide. Crowd 4,828.



MATCH STATS:

ADELAIDE CITY FORCE:
Knezevic, Hornjik, Tobin, Mori, Veart, Sabljak, Vidmar, Kemp, Costanzo, Hassell, Pelosi. (Brain 87).



MARCONI STALLIONS:
Turnbull, Gibson, Babic M. Longo, Care, Babic Z, Maloney, Smith (Renaud 59), Invincible, Farah, Zoric (Duric 45).

Yellows:

Marconi: Longo 37, Babic S. 38
Vidmar 90.

Best Players:

3. KEMP (FORCE)
2. Care (Marconi)
1. Sabljak (Force)

Referee: Matthew Breeze



By Margaret Bowden
and Donald Campbell

The Hindmarsh crowd was treated to a spectacle of scintillating soccer from both sides - yet only for the first half which showed every sign of living up to the high quality traditionally associated with the City/Marconi Italian derby.

Marconi looked uncharacteristically aggressive in their predominantly red strip, although NSL best dressed coach Eddie Krncevic brought his customary sartorial elegance to the visitors' bench.

Marconi started at a cracking pace, blitzing sleepy-looking City with a goal in the 5th minute.

They had threatened to score in the 3rd minute when Christian Care gained possession in midfield with a superb tackle and pushed the ball through to Sean Babic, but Babic was offside.

Two minutes later, the move was reversed. Babic sent the ball through for

Care, whose unchallenged shot found the back of the net: 1-0 Marconi.

City keeper Vilson Knezevic seemed stunned, but raced into action a minute later to deny Babic a clear chance. Knezevic's awakening seemed to wake the whole City team, Alex Tobin sending Damian Mori away with a 40 metre long ball over the Marconi defence, only to see the referee's assistant's flag go up for off-side.

City continued to pump high balls forward, but big Mark Babic and Dominic Longo headed clear.

Persistence paid off for the home side in the 15th minute when Angelo Costanzo gained possession in defence, ran the ball up the right wing and sent in a high cross for striker Claudio Pelosi who powered a header into the net off the inside of the left hand upright.

This was the turning point for City Player of the Match Matthew Kemp stamped his authority on the game, winning the ball in defence, running forward and laying off passes for Mori and Pelosi.

It was only a matter of time before City scored their second. It came in the 20th minute through a classic move started by Kemp wide on the left.

Kemp passed to Aurelio Vidmar in the centre who cheekily back-heeled for Mori overlapping on his left. Mori whipped the ball across into the path of Nick Sabljak speeding unmarked into the centre of the penalty area. What a strike! 2-1 City. Marconi keeper Michael Turnbull had no chance.

Marconi almost replied immediately when Carl Veart complacently knocked the ball square in defence into the path of Danny Invincible.

Knezevic saved Veart the embarrassment of giving away a goal. This near disaster spurred City to seek a third goal, which almost came from a Tobin header in the 23rd minute. Sabljak lofted the ball in from a corner on the right hand side, big Alex headed on target, but Turnbull saved.

Aurelio Vidmar upset referee Matthew Breeze and received a stern talking-to. Eventually, in the 90th minute, Breeze lost his patience and showed Vidmar the yellow card.

Neither side gave an inch for the remainder of the first half, both teams executing tough tackles and chasing back desperately if they lost possession.

Invincible dragged Veart down in frustration only 20 metres from goal, but the free kick came to nothing.

Longo hacked danger man Sabljak down from behind and went into Breeze's black book.

A minute later Zelko Babic joined him for kicking Atila Hornjik in the back. City, undaunted by Marconi's rough tactics, replied by stepping up the pace. Veart went on a mazy run up the middle of the park, finishing with a cracking shot which just skimmed over the bar.

Sean Babic replied with an almost instant replay at the other end.

Kemp then set the City attack in motion again, passing to Costanzo overlapping on the right. Costanzo crossed the ball into the penalty area for Mori, but Turnbull leapt to save.

Pelosi then sent in an opportunistic



Nick Sabljak's performance was another impressive one for Force, but they could only extract a point from a determined Marconi.

long shot. With Mori advancing and the Marconi defence nowhere in sight, Turnbull entertained the crowd, racing out of his area to head the ball clear!

The first half ended with a low shot from Mori, saved competently by Turnbull.

City had a chance to bury the game only minutes into the second half when Vidmar sent a curling low shot just wide of the right hand post.

Care and Sean Babic then combined for Marconi, but Brad Hassell cleared for City.

Kemp sent Vidmar through into the box. Marconi cleared for a City corner on the left. Sabljak knocked the ball back to Hassell whose shot from 20 metres went just wide of the near post.

Brad Maloney replied for Marconi. He looked set to have a close range shot when Costanzo dispossessed him. A few minutes later he fired in a low shot, but Knezevic saved.

The next few minutes were marred by clumsy tackles from Vidmar and Sabljak. Costanzo then gave away a free kick 25 metres out, but Marconi sub Brendan Renaud fired straight into the City wall.

Another chance for City - another chance lost. Knezevic sent a huge goal kick almost to the opposite penalty area, Pelosi ran onto it and knocked it through for Mori. Turnbull flung himself at Mori's shot, clearing with his boot - but Pelosi was there again to pounce on the clearance. With Turnbull out of position, Pelosi slammed the ball in high - over the bar!

Kemp then ran up the centre of the park and passed to Mori on the right who looked set to shoot but instead switched the ball to the opposite side of the area for Pelosi but Marconi cleared.

Big Mark Babic then put a cruncher on Kemp. Veart took the free kick 30 metres out but again Marconi cleared.

Five minutes left in the game. Suddenly Marconi seemed to get a second wind. Mark Babic passed to Maloney who sent Renaud away into the penalty area. Only a brilliant tackle from Costanzo saved City the ignominy of seeing their lead lost in the final minutes.

But his heroics were not enough. Half a minute later, Maloney passed to Care who knocked the ball to Babic only 8 metres from goal. Babic shot. Tobin tried to clear but the ball ricocheted off Knezevic and trickled across the line - 2-2 after 85 minutes. Disbelief enveloped Hindmarsh.

A minute later Marconi almost well and truly put the nail in City's coffin with a rocket of a long, low shot from Renaud rebounding off the inside of the right hand post.

City had two more chances for maximum points. Sub Louis Brain couldn't get his boot to the ball as Turnbull fumbled a shot from Mori, then both Mori and Costanzo leaped at the far post to head in from a Vidmar cross, but the chance went begging.

After the game, Eddie Krncevic said he thought the draw was a fair result, but that Renaud's shot should have gone in. "3-2 would have been better," was his dry observation.

coast fm

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ADELAIDE

TALKING SOCCER

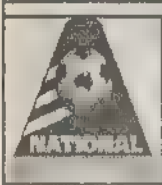
EVERY SUNDAY

MORNING

9-11.30 AM

Everything from the
Adelaide and national scene

Gutsy South show their pedigree



SOUTH MELBOURNE 2

Panopoulos 6 pen, Vlahos 64.

SYDNEY OLYMPIC 0

Wednesday night at Bob Jane Stadium, Melbourne. Crowd: 5,827

Round 18 game



MATCH STATS:

SOUTH MELBOURNE: Jones, Blasis, Liparoti, Orlic, Tsekis, Panopoulos, (Lozanovski 88), Alagich, De Amicis, Trimboli (c), Anastasiadis (Curcija 62), Vlahos (Coveny 81).



SYDNEY OLYMPIC: Bouhoutsos, Juric (c), Zoricich, Sinozic, Thomas (Tome 81), Zorbas, Mendez, Wilson, Emerton, Cardozo, Arambasic (Carle 62). Subs not used: Kohler.

Yellow Cards:

Souths: Liparoti 39, De Amicis 66, 80, Trimboli 91+.

Olympic: Juric 6, Mendez 23, Thomas 31, Zorbas 39, Wilson 50, Carle 74.

Red Cards:

Souths: Orlic (15), De Amicis (80).

BEST PLAYERS:

3. JONES (SM)

2. Vlahos (SM)

1. Panopoulos (SM).

By Alan Clark

"We've won a couple of championships since I've been in charge, but this victory is right up there with them (because of) what we had to overcome", said coach Ange Postecoglou after watching nine-man South Melbourne win 2-0 against table-topping Sydney Olympic at Bob Jane on Australia Day.

Coming of the back of a score-line more suitable for a contest at the nearby Melbourne Tennis Centre, South Melbourne had wounded pride and an ailing league position to remedy.

After withstanding a blistering opening from Olympic, South settled when Steve Panopoulos converted a sixth minute penalty after Olympic captain Ante Juric brought down John Anastasiadis in the box.

But the comfort of this early lead evaporated when defender Nick Orlic was sent-off nine minutes later. He committed a last-man foul tackle just outside the penalty-area on Zlatko Arambasic, speeding goalwards.

The reorganised South formation coped with the player deficit, and through new signing Andy Vlahos, managed to launch effective raids themselves. Vlahos

came close just before the break with a cheeky chip over George Bouhoutsos which hit the front face of the bar as it dropped, before being scrambled over the line for a corner.

But the debutant was not to be denied. Michael Curcija had replaced Anastasiadis just after the hour and within minutes of his introduction had fed Vlahos with a through ball. The small winger got his angles right to score off the far post and provoke unbridled celebration on and off the park.

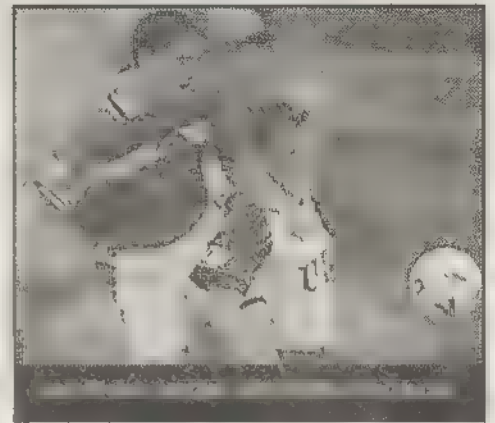
"From the first minute, (Vlahos) was buzzing, and I was very happy with him," Postecoglou said, surely underplaying his feelings.

The eventual outcome of the match could scarcely have been guessed after Olympic's storming first five minutes. Within that time, man of the match Jones found his goal under siege. There was a whiff of continuance.

Before most South players had touched the ball, Gabriel Mendez received a cut-back from Pablo Cardozo eight metres out, but flashed his shot wide. Barely a minute later, Jones had to dash smartly off his line to pick the ball off Arambasic's feet as the big striker was through.

But after that early mis-directed pass, Jones never put a foot wrong throughout the rest of the game. He brought off a string of saves, including an impressive double late in the game from Cardozo and Juric as Olympic capitalised on its two player advantage.

Fausto De Amicis was the second South player dismissed after receiving his



second yellow card ten minutes from regulation time after tripping Peter Zorbas. It took Diomis fully a minute to realise he had already written De Amicis' name and so produce the red card, such was the number of players he had booked.

Olympic coach Branko Culina, bristling at a slight he believed Postecoglou made following South's loss in Sydney - attributing it to the vigours of their Brazilian adventure, seethed through much of the post-match discussion.

"If (South) had five players we wouldn't have beaten them tonight, let alone nine or ten", he said. "Today we stumbled."

"Chris Jones made some brilliant saves - Pablo Cardozo on his day is the best player in Australia, but today he couldn't have scored if he had no goalkeeper and he was one metre out - that's how things were going for us."

"I think we've both got a problem. Good teams don't get thumped six-nil, and good teams don't lose against nine or ten players."

Young leads the Wolves charge as Utd flounder

SYDNEY UNITED 2

Bosnar 10, Maric 78.

WOLLONGONG WOLVES 5

Young 3, 11, Masi 55, Horsley 71, Chipperfield 88.

Wednesday night at Sydney United Sports Centre, Sydney. Crowd: 3,112.

Round 18 game



MATCH STATS:



SYDNEY UNITED:

Hughes, Bosnar, Maric, Jurilj, Savoca, Rastall (J Moric 61), Arrarte, Genc, Pondeljak, Bosevski (Younis 57), Usljebrka



WOLLONGONG WOLVES:

Pogliacomini, Ceccoli, Stanton, Cervinski, Horsley, Young, Chipperfield, Harlock, Petrovski (Surjan 45), Huxley, Masi (Spencer 73).

Yellow Cards:

United. Savoca

BEST PLAYERS:

3. STUART YOUNG (WOLVES)

2. David Cervinski (Wolves)

1. Tom Maric (SUnited)

Referee: Con Diomis

By Nathan Simpson

Wollongong Wolves captain Matt Horsley and striker Scott Chipperfield's selection in the Soccerroo squad should bolster their side's chances of surviving in the National Soccer League next season.

While the pair's departure will be a handicap to the Wolves, which must now play Newcastle and Sydney Olympic without their star duo, it should, at least, make Soccer Australia sit up and take note that Wollongong is a region rich in soccer talent.

SA is looking to cull up to four teams next season, with Wollongong a target.

Another positive sign for the club in their case for survival was the fact they easily disposed of Sydney United 5-2 at Edensor Park in a mid-week fixture - lifting the club to the top of the table for the first time in 12 years.

All signs look positive for Wollongong as the half-way mark to the National League ticked over during the week and Horsley said his side's latest

victory was evident of its recent good form.

"The boys are playing a good blend of soccer and the fact we play with four strikers is starting to show with some positive results," he said.

"We've had a great season so far but as Nick (Theodorakopoulos) keeps telling us, there's a long way to go yet. The result against Sydney United, to me, showed that we can play well both at home and on the road... scoring five away from home is a good feeling."

In fact, the Wolves have the best goal-scoring record in the National League - 38 goals in 18 games.

The goal-scoring machine also rolled into action against United, and as a result also saw the sacking of United coach David Ratcliffe.

The former Wolves coach said poor recruiting by club management contributed to his downfall and that the job had turned out to be harder than he thought, as most of United's first-grade players left for Parramatta at the start of the season.

Ivan Petkovic takes over the reigns of United.

Englishman Stuart Young, who started his career with Arsenal, netted twice against United and set up two other goals. He scored both his goals inside the opening 11 minutes - the first from eight metres and the second with an easy header from just a metre out.

United's Eddie Bosnar also got on

the score-sheet when he rifled the ball into the back of the net after some scrappy Wollongong defending. The score was 2-1 at half-time.

Ten minutes after the restart the Wolves scored their all-important third goal.

A well-weighted Horsley cross found Esala Masi, who sent his header past goalkeeper Brett Hughes with ease. Horsley made it 4-1 in the 71st minute when he tucked the ball past Hughes from five metres and fellow Soccerroo teammate added his side's fifth with a blistering strike in the 90th minute.

Earlier, United's Tom Maric scored a spectacular goal with 10 minutes to go - but it came too late.

Wollongong coach Nick Theodorakopoulos said he was confident his side would return home with the three points.

"Even when we scored our second goal I was sure we'd win," he said.

"I'm very happy for the boys as they've put in a lot of work to get this far and some of the things they did out there tonight surprised even me... our passing game is improving every week."

"The only downside was the injury to Saso (Petrovski)."

The Wolves leading marksman received a nasty gash to his leg late in the first half and was taken to hospital. He is expected to be out of action for a fortnight.

Inspired Spirit subs save the (Australia) day



NORTHERN SPIRIT 3

Seal 50, Bingley 83, Saad 90.

CARLTON 2

Thompson 40, Moreira 62.

Wednesday night at North Sydney Oval, Sydney. Crowd: 7,138



MATCH STATS:

NORTHERN SPIRIT:
Perosh, Bingley,
Casserly, Sobczyk,
Enes (Saad 85),
Bilokapic, Cunico
(Rudan 72), Slater,
Seal, Perinich,
Langdon



CARLTON:
Anastasiadis,
Anthopoulos, Deans,
Terminello, Marth,
Lupsansky Thompson, Moreira,
Packer (Atkinson 75), Azzopardi,
Markovski (Conroy 55)

Yellow Cards:
Northern Spirit: Enes 43, Bingley 60,
Casserly 85.
Carlton: Packer 43

BEST PLAYERS:
3 MATTHEW BINGLEY (SPIRIT)
2 Andrew Marth (Carlton)
1 Robbie Slater (Spirit)

Referee: David Dwight

By Paul Goodwin

Under leaden skies at North Sydney Oval an Australia Day crowd was treated to a five-goal cliff-hanger with Northern Spirit prevailing after a tumultuous final ten minute assault on the visiting Carlton team's goal.

Falling behind twice to their Melbourne visitors, Spirit looked to have almost left it too late to avoid another ignominious defeat at the hands of a side they had largely outplayed.

For once it was the visiting coach, in this case Stuart Munro, who bewailed his team's poor defending as the locals grabbed all three points with two late goals from set plays.

"I had players out and it showed in the lack of experience by my defenders in dealing with corner kicks and free kicks," he reflected after the game.

"We did not defend at all well inside our own penalty area and that cost us the game," he concluded.

He may justifiably be disappointed, as the Spirit have been known all season for their inability to score from corners or free kicks, but they came up with the goods this time.

The Spirit side has been far from

convincing at home this season, clinging on to beat Marconi in one recent match and almost dropping all three points against Perth Glory in its preceding match here

The 3-2 win was their second at the ground this season, the other against the Football Kingz of Auckland also a knife-edge job for Graham Arnold's men

The game began with some bright play by the hosts which saw Carlton sitting back and absorbing the inevitable pressure

Apart from runs from Alex Moreira and Lubo Lapsansky which ended with shots going wide, Carlton were doing most of their work at the back

Tony Perinich dragged his shot wide in the 30th after Luke Casserly and Paul Bilokapic had combined well and Robbie Slater controlled a high bouncing ball, following a corner on the left in the 36th, to steer a shot firmly at goal, only for David Terminello to boot it clear off the line, with keeper Dean Anastasiadis beaten.

Carlton took an unexpected lead in the 40th minute when a free kick, well inside their own half, despatched out wide on the left to Archie Thompson, which should have been cleared by a header from Casserly, led to the wingman cutting inside and unleashing an unstoppable shot past John Perosh.

David Seal could have levelled three minutes later from Slater's low cross, but needed an extra touch which allowed the keeper to make the save when the Spirit man eventually got his shot in.

Seal redeemed himself in the 50th when a free kick from the left by Matthew

Langdon, floated to the far post from a very deep and wide position, found the former Northampton Town striker free at the far post where he stooped to head past Anastasiadis

Carlton bounced back to regain the lead in the 62nd when a low Andrew Marth free kick from 25 yards was only parried by Perosh and the lurking Moreira kept his cool to tap the loose ball just inside the left post.

Michael Cunico should have brought the home side level in the 67th when Slater crossed smartly from the left, but from right in front he blasted well over the bar.

With time ticking away Lapsansky almost put the game beyond the Spirit when left free inside the box in the ensuing passage of play, but Perosh saved well at point blank range.

Northern Spirit equalised in the 83rd when a ball crossed from deep on the left and high to the far post, was nodded back by substitute Abbas Saad to the edge of the six-yard box where Matthew Bingley hit the ball on the rise past a helpless keeper. It was a veritable 'screamer'.

The game was poised to move into stoppage time when a corner on the left from Slater, headed goalwards by Mark Rudan, was stabbed home at close range by the preying Saad. The crowd erupted in joy at the sudden turnaround by their favourite sons

It was a terrific win by the locals, for whom both substitutes, Saad and Rudan, starred after joining the fray in the last half hour.

Breakers' unbeaten run finally ends

ADELAIDE CITY FORCE 2

Kemp 7, Pelosi 32.

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS 0

Wednesday night at Hindmarsh Stadium, Adelaide. Crowd 3,895 Round 18 match

MATCH STATS:

ADELAIDE CITY FORCE:

Knezevic, Hornjik, Tobin,
Mori (Brain 75), Veart,
Sabljak (Hassell 63),
Vidmar, Kemp (Talladira
78), Costanzo, Pelosi,
Kim.

NEWCASTLE BREAKERS:

Catlin, Pryce, McManus,
Sprod, Dodd, Buonavoglia
(Wilson 71), Wiecezorek
(Roberts 75), Owens,
Trpceviski, Harper

(Tancheski 61), Moore.

Yellow Cards: Nil

BEST PLAYERS:
3 VEART (FORCE)
2 Pelosi (Force)
1 Kemp (Force)

Referee: Gerry Connolly

By Margaret Bowden
and Donald Campbell

A strong breeze blowing to the north should have helped Newcastle put early pressure on the Force, but Zoran Matic's once again reshuffled team took control from the start, kicking into the wind. With 90% of possession throughout the match, they never let Newcastle into the game.

Only seven minutes into the match, Claudio Pelosi and Matthew Kemp combined to put the Force 1-0 up.

Nick Sabljak crossed the ball in from the left. The Breakers defence cleared, Kemp ran onto the clearance and knocked the ball to Pelosi on the edge of the 18-yard area who held off three defenders as Kemp continued his forward run.

Pelosi turned on a pin-head and knocked a centimetre-perfect pass into Kemp's path. With only Bobby Catlin to beat, Kemp slotted the ball into the left bottom corner of the net.

Carl Veart (pictured below) gave Newcastle no room. He seemed to have ball magnets in his boots, picking up everything in the Force's defensive third and pumping forty metre passes upfield for Aurelio Vidmar, Pelosi and Sabljak. Shane Pryce and Todd McManus were valiant in the Newcastle defence, but it just wasn't their night.

In the 19th minute Costanzo lobbed the ball to Pelosi on the right.

Pelosi cut it across to Sabljak whose shot hit the inside of the right post. This sent a wake-up call to John Buonavoglia, who latched onto a Pryce clearance and charged at the Force defence down the right. But Veart, Alex Tobin and Attila Hornjik had his measure

Vidmar slipped around Greg Owens for a close-range shot - over the bar. Then Veart surprised the Breakers with a quickly taken free kick from 20 metres - just wide

Andy Harper could have put Newcastle back in the picture, but failed to convert from a Brad Wiecezorek cross. A few minutes later the ball was in the back of the net at the other end. Veart sent a long ball forward for Mori.

Todd McManus headed clear. Vidmar pounced on the clearance, held up play, turned and shot straight into a defender. The rebound fell to Pelosi who slammed it in: 2-0 Force

Ex-Force player Travis Dodd replied with a powerful header, wide of the right hand post. Kemp dodged into the penalty area but the Breakers' defence blocked his shot

Buonavoglia caused a headache for the Force in the opening minutes of the second half as light rain made conditions slippery. He sent a long ball into the penalty area for Harper. Veart dived full stretch to head the ball back to Knezevic as Harper was about to strike.

Kemp passed the ball wide to Mori on the right who raced through the Breakers' defence and crossed to Pelosi. Pelosi appeared to chest the ball down, turned and let fly a cracking left footer - Goal! No! Referee Connolly, who may have created a record by issuing no cards, disallowed it for hand-ball.

Newcastle had the final scoring chance through Dodd, who blitzed his way through the Force defence into the six-yard area before Knezevic pounced on the ball.



Footy Kingz' best win of the season



FOOTBALL KINGZ 4

M. Elrick 40, D. Mennillo 55, 82, A. Silva 89.

PERTH GLORY 0

T. Halpin 45.

Wednesday night at North Harbour Stadium, Auckland. Crowd: 3,878.

Round 18



MATCH STATS:

FOOTBALL KINGZ:

Utting, Bunce, Jones, Vicalich (Perry 66), Middleby, Ngata (Van Steeden, 64), Osman, Mennillo, Stergiopoulos, Silva, Elrick (Riddle 73)

PERTH GLORY:

Petkovic, Harnwell, Naven, Thorp, Trajkovski, Halpin, Buljan (Carbone 71), Junior, Miller, Boutsianis, Edwards

(Afkos 78)

Yellow Cards:

Kingz: A. Silva (38), M. Stergiopoulos (69), D. Mennillo (79), C. Bunce (86)
Perth: A. Edwards (14), H. Thorp (24), E. Junior (36), G. Naven (42)

Red Cards:

Perth: H. Thorp (36), T. Halpin (89)

BEST PLAYERS:

3. D. MENNILLO (KINGZ)
2. R. Middleby (Kingz)
1. T. Halpin (Perth Glory)

Referee: Simon Micallef

By Jeremy Ruane

The Football Kingz scored their most emphatic win yet in the National Soccer League on January 26, crushing Perth Glory 4-1 at North Harbour Stadium to maintain their unbeaten run since the turn of the century.

Admittedly, they were assisted by the indiscipline of their visitors, who covered themselves in anything but what their club's name would suggest en route to concluding the match with just nine players.

Hamilton Thorp, for violent conduct in the 36th minute, and Troy Halpin, whose two-footed lunge four minutes from time marred an otherwise impressive personal display, were the duo sent to the showers earlier than their contemporaries by referee Simon Micallef, who wielded the yellow card on eight occasions in response to as many moments of madness which fully merited such punishment.

The Kingz enjoyed slightly the better of the early exchanges, although Perth were first to put the ball in the net. However, Con Boutsianis' fourteenth minute strike was ruled out for an infringement by Alistair Edwards on the

back-from-injury Michael Utting.

Both goalkeepers were in action just before the half-hour, Utting saving from a spectacular Jamie Harnwell effort moments after Jason Petkovic had pawed an Ivan Vicalich drive to safety. But Utting was beaten all ends up by a Halpin free-kick in the 32nd minute, only to see the ball cannon off both the crossbar and far post and bounce back into play.

Mark Elrick, starting his first game for the Kingz, marked the occasion with an absolute snorter of a strike five minutes before the break, thundering home a venomous twenty-five yarder after Dino Mennillo and Robbie Middleby had combined to carve open the outnumbered Perth combination.

But the Kingz advantage was short-lived, Halpin levelling matters with virtually the last kick of the half with a precise twenty-yard grasscutter which left the clearly ring-rusty Utting - this was his first game in two months - clutching at air.

Seconds after Utting was again left to count his blessings after an Edwards drive rattled the crossbar from twenty yards, the home side regained the lead in the 55th minute. Elrick and Middleby were Perth's initial tormentors, but it was Mennillo who proved to be the true thorn in their side, lashing home from twenty-five yards on receipt of a measured pass from Harry Ngata.

The Halpin-inspired Perth combination went in search of another equaliser, but they failed to truly test Utting for the remainder of the match, largely due to the Kingz offside trap, which performed flaw-



lessly throughout proceedings. Instead, it was the Kingz who looked the side more likely to score again, and they duly added a third goal eight minutes from time, Middleby again involved.

A deft pass to Silva allowed Mennillo to surge forward from deep, and the Chilean striker rolled the ball neatly into his path, the midfielder coolly clipping the ball beyond the advancing Petkovic to all but clinch the points for the Kingz.

Silva himself wrapped up the points in stoppage time, prodding home from close range at the second attempt following a goalmouth scramble inspired by the promptings of Mennillo (above) and Middleby, easily the Kingz best in this, their biggest NSL victory to date.

Ardone's form a good sign for Power

GIPPSLAND FALCONS 0

PARRAMATTA POWER 2

Ardone 14, Berry 49.

Wednesday night at Falcons Stadium, Morwell. Crowd: 1,450. Round 18



MATCH STATS:

GIPPSLAND FALCONS:

Jevdjevic, Fak, Gotis, Durakovic, Marcina (Savage 75), Puca, Robertson, Bell, Hutchinson Nilo (Kakos 75), MacNicol.

PARRAMATTA POWER:

Gibson, M., Barrett, Santalab, Vrkic, Bynes, Bennett, Burns, Ardone, Berry, Sterjovski, Griffiths (Angelucci 75)

Yellow Cards:

Power: Griffiths 23, Vrkic

45, Ardone 45, Barrett 52, Berry 53, Burns 59.

Falcons: Hutchinson 15, Bell 68.

BEST PLAYERS:

3. ARDONE (POWER)
2. Vrkic (POWER)
1. Robertson (FALCONS)
Referee: Wayne Dade

water at Mobil Park as they did the double over the Gippsland Falcons.

A heavy deluge that started an hour before kick-off and continued throughout the entire game resulted in surface water that turned the game into a slip and slide splash feast.

Players were over-running the ball, struggling to hold their feet and finding that passes were falling short of their mark held up in puddles.

It was obvious at kick off that the side that adapted best to the difficult conditions would come out on top and that is how the game turned out. Parramatta adapted better to the conditions, took their chances and held off the Falcons with strength and determination.

In a match with very few clear cut chances the Falcons had the first real opportunity of the game when in the 5 min MacNicol was put through behind the Parramatta defence by a great ball from Hutchinson. MacNicol cut inside his man and hit a goal bound shot, which was well tipped over by Gibson.

Parramatta were adapting better to the conditions with the forward combination of Sterjovski and Griffiths making good runs and forcing the Falcons defence into some desperate defending early in the game. The

first real opportunity to the Power resulted in the first goal of the game in the 14 minute. Pressure by Sterjovski and Griffiths lead to the ball falling loose after a good cross from the left by Berry. Sterjovski pounced onto the loose ball with his shot being smothered by Jevdjevic in the Falcons goal. The hard running and ever alert Ardone on hand to put the rebound away. 1-0 Parramatta Power.

The rest of the half degenerated into a midfield scramble with neither side able to put together any free flowing moves in the difficult conditions.

MacNicol for the Falcons had another long range effort in the 28 min sail well wide and Santalab in the 47 min for the Power, hit a cross come shot that almost caught Jevdjevic napping in the Falcons goal. Half time at the Gippsland aquatic centre Parramatta 1 Gippsland 0.

With no relief from the heavy rain the second half started much as the first with neither side able to put together any structured forward moves. It was a case of kick and hope and which defence would hold on without making any errors.

The first chance of the half fell to the Falcons when Bell latched on to a half clearance by the Power defence only to shoot wide of the mark.

The second goal to Parramatta in the 49 min came from a corner conceded due to the waterlogged pitch. A Durakovic back pass stopped dead in a puddle and he followed up well to put the ball away for a corner as Griffiths was about to pounce.

The resulting corner was hit perfectly as Berry met it header unchallenged at the near post 2-0 Parramatta Power.

The Falcons threw everything at the

Power, but the defensive combination of Barrett, Vrkic and Bennett held strong and the hard running Ardone was relishing the conditions dominating midfield battles. The Falcons had a great opportunity in the 64 min from a free kick just outside the penalty area with Marcina hitting a powerful shot just past the right upright with Gibson beaten.

Hopkins played his hand in the 75 min making a double substitution and pushing Gotis into a forward role in an attempt to counter the ariel dominance of Vrkic at the back for Parramatta.

Mitchell responded by bringing on a tall striker in Angelucci to try and expose the lack of height in the Falcons defence.

Angelucci made an immediate impression with a great run down the right and a cross well met by Sterjovski in the 76 min. His header saved by Jevdjevic in the Falcons goal.

The last chance of the match fell to the Falcons in the 90 min when Gotis latched on to a Power clearance that got stuck in a puddle. Gotis played a beautiful through ball to Kakos who found himself one-on-one with the keeper. His shot well saved down low by Gibson.

The victory to Parramatta puts them one point ahead of the Falcons with two games in hand and a real chance of making the finals after a sluggish start to the season.

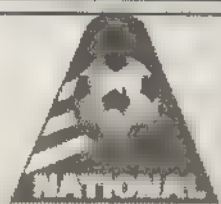
The Falcons on the other hand have dropped six valuable points and will need to turn things around in a hurry to have any realistic chance of making the finals.

The best player on the night in trying conditions was Walter Ardone in midfield for Parramatta.

By Lucio Viggiano

In conditions more suited to water polo or synchronised swimming, Parramatta Power were like ducks to

Dull game but Marconi takes three points



MARCONI STALLIONS 2

Zoric 77, Duric 90.

BRISBANE STRIKERS 0

Wednesday night at Marconi Stadium, Sydney. Crowd: 3,828

Round 18



MATCH STATS:

MARCONI STALLIONS:

Turnbull, Farah (Renaud 62), M. Babic, Longo, Invincible, Smith, Gibson, Maloney (Zoric 62), McDonald, Trajanovski (Duric 68), S. Babic.



BRISBANE STRIKERS:

Bolton, McClaren, Gwynne, Battistin, Pilic (Dwyer 62), North, Meredith (Srhoj 77),

Hews, Ditton, Grierson, Baldwin.

Yellow Cards:

Stallions: Farah 53, McDonald 75, Zoric 79.

Strikers: McClaren 8, Dwyer 73, Baldwin 79.

BEST PLAYERS:

3. BOLTON (STRIKERS)

2 McDonald (Stallions)

1. Turnbull (Stallions).

Referee: Eddie Lennie

By John Vrtaric

As coach Eddie Krncevic remarked after the game there are times that a substitution by a coach can be an inspiring move - it doesn't happen that often so a coach will take the credit at every opportunity - and this was such an occasion as the introduction of Vlado Zoric and Alex Duric produced two goals, one to each of the subs.

This was an important clash between two teams vying for the top six and a win would be worth double points with the loser finding it that much more difficult to maintain its challenge.

With the 'first leg' in Brisbane resulting in a loss to the home team the Strikers were desperate to go home with a positive result.

The importance of the game seemed to be lost on the players as the quality of play was very poor up until the introduction of Zoric and Duric with Krncevic describing the first seventy minutes as boring.

The game opened brightly with Marconi having an opportunity in the 3rd minute when Darren McDonald won the ball with a tough challenge in the middle of the park. He delivered the ball to his captain Brad Maloney who played a one-two

with Danny Invincible Maloney received the ball just inside the Strikers' box and with plenty of time he attempted to place the ball with the side of his foot but it cleared the bar without any threat to the Chile bound Strikers' keeper, Clint Bolton.

This neat little move turned out to be the only highlight for a little while and it wasn't until the 23rd minute that Brisbane had their first half chance. A good long ball from Glenn Gwynne was intended for David Pilic overlapping on the right but young 'keeper Michael Turnbull was quickly of his line was able to smother the ball in a tussle with Pilic and had no trouble collecting the ball which had rolled free.

Turnbull and Bolton were the stars of the game and both were particular effective in dealing with crosses.

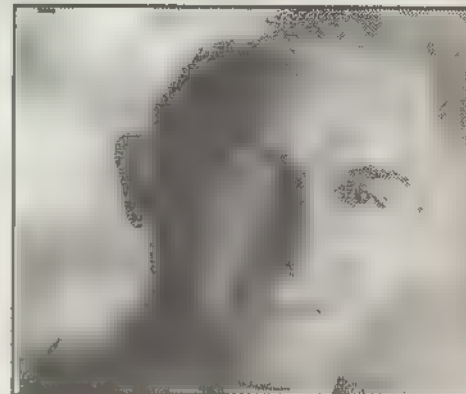
The best chance of the half fell to Sean Babic in the 38th minute when an attempted clearance by Joey Jade North cannoned off McDonald into his path. He came face to face with Bolton inside the penalty area but the 'keeper was equal to the task and saved Babic's well struck shot.

Bolton (pictured) was again in the right spot in the last minute of the half when Chad Gibson struck a powerful shot on goal but Bolton saved with relative ease.

The second half started in a similar vein and there was little for the crowd to enthuse about.

In the 64th minute Strikers' captain Stuart McClaren had the ball in the back of the net from a corner but referee Eddie Lennie ruled that a foul had been committed - something that was missed by most others including coach John Kosmina who was mystified as to why the goal was disallowed after the game.

In the 71st minute Turnbull made a



pivotal save which was probably the turning point of this game.

A cross from the left by Nick Meredith allowed Peter Grierson to reach the bouncing ball first and his diving header had goal written all over it until Turnbull jumped spectacularly to tip the ball over the bar.

Zoric soon took advantage over Strikers' misfortune - he won a duel in the corner against Brad Ditton and was able to wriggle free and provided an inch perfect cross to fellow substitute Duric, unmarked on the far post.

With plenty of time and space Duric was able to slot the ball easily past Bolton inside his left post to give Marconi a 1-0 lead.

Zoric created and scored the second goal - he fed Sean Babic on the right who easily skipped away from Mark Battistin but whose shot bounced out of Bolton's right post.

Zoric was there waiting for it and his first shot bounced off a defender straight back to him and he made no mistake with the second opportunity by squeezing the ball past three defenders and the post.

We should have won this, says Sermanni

CANBERRA COSMOS 1

De Jesus 67 pen.

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS 1

Susa 23.

Wednesday night at Bruce Stadium, Canberra. Crowd: 1959.

Round 18



MATCH STATS:



CANBERRA COSMOS:

Konstantinou, Milin, Popovich Polak (Prenzowski 71), Watkins (Purdue 79), Arranz, Hamilton James,

Hooker, Roberts (De Jesus 57), Gonzalez.



MELBOURNE KNIGHTS:

John, Rajher (Reda 83), Kovacevic, Vukadin, Urlovic, Abbas (Silic 71), Banini (Rados 75), Kiratzoglou, Vargas, Susa, Cervinski.

Yellow Cards:

Cosmos: Arranz 57

Knights: Urlovic 12, Abbas 65

BEST PLAYERS:

3: HAMILTON (COSMOS)

2: Vargas (Knights)

1: James (Cosmos)

Referee: Mark Shields

By Nick Guoth

In a mirror image of last Sunday's game the Melbourne Knights survived a late comeback by the Canberra Cosmos to draw 1-1. In Melbourne the scoreline was also 1-1, but there the home team dominated.

Knights coach Vlado Vanis stated that he was happy with the point. "In the end of the day I was happy as in the last fifteen minutes we were all the time under the hammer".

Vanis was happy to take two points from the last two games, but he could see that the results were not helpful to either side in their chase to move up the National League table.

The Cosmos provided all the early pressure but with no results and only really one chance that saw Harry James pull back a ball from the goal line only to have Knight's goalkeeper Martin John beat Daniel Watkins to the ball.

In the first half chances were few and far between. Yet at the 23rd minute mark, Adrian Cervinski sent the ball from

the left to Zeljko Susa on the far side. Susa, who was in acres of space, had time to settle and pick his spot giving Cosmos custodian Angelo Konstantinou absolutely no chance.

Five minutes later and the visitors were nearly two up. Paul Urlovic was left free on the left and his cross, when not cleared, fell to Ante Kovacevic. His shot needed a good reflex save from Konstantinou.

The second period commenced as the first had left off, that being dreary with the rare chance. Then in the 65th minute, the speedy Gabriel Gonzalez strode into the box and was upended by Nigerian International Murtala Toyin Abbas.

Ivo De Jesus, who had only come on as a substitute some 10 minutes before, took the kick to even up the score. More important for the spectators, the goal brought the match to life.

For the next 25 minutes both sides had numerous chances to score the winning goal. Urlovic came close on more than one occasion but just could not find the target, and De Jesus should have done better with his opportunity just minutes from the end.

Worst of all misses came from Cervinski with ten minutes left. He manoeuvred himself free just outside the box and received the ball to be one-on-one with the keeper. Only problem was that he strayed off-side just before the final pass.

Cosmos coach Tom Sermanni said



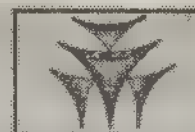
that he was worried about how his players were doing in the first half and how they seemed to look like the Canberra of old, but was very satisfied with the way the team fought back to dominate both territory and possession for most of the second stanza.

• "After the goal was scored, things began to go right for us and I was pleased with the way we recovered to dominate the game", Sermanni said.

Yet, "I still think we need to do better when we get into scoring positions; we should have won this game".

Ram

INSIDE JUNIOR SOCCER



AIS NEW BOYS BEATEN BY ACTAS



Chris Conti reports that the local derby between the ACTAS and the AIS produced a memorable game at Bruce Stadium, which was distinguished by three excellent goals and a send off.

The first twenty minutes were quiet enough with the new intake at the AIS playing rather tentative football and the ACT Academy beginning to wear their opponents down. Both teams were shaping up after two difficult double-headers in the week, the AIS against Parramatta Power and ACTAS against Olympic Academy.

It was the AIS who began proceedings with a vengeance when Mimi Saric let fly with a thunderbolt from 30 metres that cannoned off the bar with ACTAS keeper Tony Giannasca helpless.

However, it was the Academy that took the lead, in the 31st minute, when Amied Shadmaan floated a ball in from the left that was met by the marauding Andrew Clark in the six-yard box. The Cosmos player delicately side-footed the ball past the AIS custodian, Andrew Carman.

Another Cosmos player in the ACTAS team Nick Mrdja, was also looking very dangerous and two minutes later his freekick was helped on its way to goal by Goran Veljanovski. The ball was heading for the net but it was deflected for a corner.

At this stage the ACTAS were well on top and were unlucky not to increase their lead when, following some good work by Adam Williams, Carl Valeri watched in agony as his delicate chip bounce off the bar with Carman way off the line.

However, on the stroke of half-time, the ACTAS did increase its lead when midfielder Stephen Kemp crossed to Williams on the right of the penalty area. His header back into the goalmouth was spectacularly met by Clark with an overhead scissors kick into the back of the net.

Not to be outdone the AIS stormed back and in stoppage time Mitch Johnson rose above the ACTAS defenders and powered a header past Giannasca. This goal kept the

match alive for the second half

The second half proved a dramatic affair early on when Veljanovski and the AIS' Mitch Prentice were involved in a spiteful scuffle which earned them both yellow cards from referee Ben Naughton. This was to prove fateful for Veljanovski. Four minutes later he chased a ball to the goal line and after failing to keep it in play kicked it away, more in frustration than anything more sinister. However, he had not given referee Naughton any alternative but to give him a second yellow card and he was sent from the field of play.

Down to ten men, the Academy were forced on to the defensive by the AIS, and for the final 30 minutes had to withstand their onslaught. However, withstand it they did to record a rare victory over their more illustrious opponents. ACTAS coach Ray Junna was justifiably proud of his team, and AIS boss Steve O'Connor was left to reflect on a positive effort from his inexperienced team. Their next meeting, in the penultimate game of the season, will be an interesting encounter after O'Connor and Mike Milovanovic have had three more months to work with the recruits.

O'Connor gave a run to West Australian, David Tarka, recently returned from the Australian Schoolboys successful tour of the UK. Tarka made a very impressive debut on the left side of the park.

ACTAS: Tony Giannasca, Andrew Clark, Amied Shadmaan, Adrien La Butte, Phil Yarnold (capt), Stephen Kemp, Adam Williams, Nick Mrdja (Alvaro Guzman), Paul Ivanic (Daniel Aliffi), Goran Veljanovski, Carl Valeri Subs not used: Matt Anstey, Steve Arnott, Ian Waldon

AIS: Andrew Carman, Ray Sejlukovski (David Tarka), Steve Pantelidis, Dustin Wells (capt), Goran Talevski, Ian Bonato (Steve Pace), Mitch Johnson, Mitch Prentice, Nick Fay, Mimi Saric, Mark Tsiorlas (Franko Parisi) Subs not used: Daniel Rainey, Zoran Talevski

Theo Katsaros reports that Marconi Stallions continued their fine form of late in defeating the Sydney United Colts by three goals to nil. The Stallions made the short trip to the Sydney United Sports Centre and continued their goal-scoring spree.

The victors' line-up included Italian import Pierluigi Di Gia who has been sidelined with a knee injury for several months.

The Stallions' led after 5 minutes when Daniel Severino found the net. Grant Last, formerly of the A.I.S., doubled the lead after 12 minutes. The match was sewn up four minutes from time when Di Gia scored his first goal of the season.

In Wollongong, the Wollongong

Wolves beat their Colts by four goals to nil. All goals were scored in an entertaining first half of football. The Wolves have steadily climbed up the league ladder after a poor start to the season. The Wolves managed just 20 goals in their first 16 games but have scored seven times in the past week.

Steven Dimetrevski opened the scoring after 10 minutes for the Wolves. Daniel Aldridge, who has not scored since mid-November, broke his drought when he netted in the 25th minute before Paul O'Grady made it 3-0 two minutes later. Paul Dimech ended the scoring in the 41st minute.

The only thing that the Northern Spirit Colts would have enjoyed on their trip north to Brisbane was the view out of their 747. The Q.A.S. handed the Spirit a 4-0 loss. The Queenslanders have cemented their place in the top four and look to be on their way to the finals in May.

Adam Webber scored after just 3 minutes to start the ball rolling. Lawrence Drake found the net twice to increase his tally for the season to eight. His double in the second half a single to Christopher Messina sealed the Spirit's fate.

In the battle between 1st and 3rd, the Parramatta Power and the Northern Spirit battled out a 1-1 draw. The match played as a curtain-raiser at Parramatta Stadium looked to be going the way of the Spirit but a late equaliser salvaged a point for the Power.

The Spirit scored after a quarter of an hour courtesy of an Adam Snyder goal and held on the lead until Danny Townsend managed to find the net a minute or so from time.

Another team that has hit a rough patch of late is Sydney Olympic. The former pace setters have lost their past three encounters but overcame a spirited Marconi Stallions Colts outfit by three goals to two.

Dylan Macallister, Nick Carle and Lee Miot scored singles for Olympic whilst Alex Brosque and Rod Sandoval replied for

NORTHERN DIVISION NYL

	P	W	D	B	L	F	A	Pts
Parramatta Power	18	13	3	1	2	49	15	42
Sydney Olympic	18	12	3	1	3	49	23	39
Q.A.S.	18	12	1	1	5	53	28	37
Northern Spirit	17	11	3	1	3	52	19	36
Marconi Stallions	16	1-	0	1	6	34	23	30
A.I.S.	16	9	2	1	5	53	22	29
Newcastle Breakers	16	9	1	1	5	29	18	28
Wollongong Wolves	18	8	2	1	8	27	28	26
Sydney United	16	8	1	1	7	25	31	25
A.C.T.A.S.	18	6	6	1	8	26	37	24
Olympic Academy	17	7	1	2	9	35	55	22
Breakers Colts	18	6	2	1	10	28	35	20
N.S.W.I.S.	16	5	3	2	8	27	23	18
Northern Spirit Colts	18	4	3	1	11	18	44	15
Stallions Colts	18	3	4	1	11	25	49	13
Sydney United Colts	17	2	3	2	12	15	42	9
Wollongong Colts	15	0	2	1	13	8	63	2

ROUND 19

A.C.T.A.S.	2	A.I.S.	1
Clark 31', 46'		Johnson 45'	
Sydney United Colts 0		Marconi Stallions	3
		Severno 5', Last 12', Di Gia 86'	
Wollongong Colts 0		Wollongong Wolves	4
		Dimetrevski 10', Aldridge 25', O'Grady 27', Dimech 41'	
Q.A.S.	4	Northern Spirit Colts	0
Webber 3', Drake 46', 89', Messina 71'			
Parramatta Power	1	Northern Spirit	1
Townsend 89'		Snyder 15'	
Marc. Stallions Colts 2		Sydney Olympic	3
Sandoval 71', Brosque 85'		Macallister 45', Carle 80', Miot 82'	
Sydney United	2	N.S.W.I.S.	1
Deak 50', Uroevski 80'		Hartge 86'	

ROUND 18 *

Sydney Olympic	3	Newcastle Breakers Colts	4
(Pisano 28', own goal 43', Miot 75')		Pryce 9', Davelaar 19' own goal 45', Sullini 84'	
Sydney United	0	Wollongong Wolves	3
		Lucas 13', O'Grady 48', Lhanas 51'	
Northern Spirit	7	Marconi Stallions Colts	0
(MacRae 5', 53', Snyder 11' Brckel 36', Prentice 42' R Griffiths 63' pen, 78' pen)			
Northern Spirit Colts	1	Wollongong Wolves Colts	1
Monteleone 20'		MacKechrie 35'	
A.C.T.A.S.	0	Syd. Olympic Academy	0
N.S.W.I.S.	1	Newcastle Breakers	2
Lockhart 57'		Anogievski 35' pen, 78'	
A.I.S.	0	Parramatta Power	3
		Dixon 38', B Santaiah 59', Kukucka 76'	

the Stallions.

Sydney United hosted the N S W I S. and took all three points courtesy of a 2-1 win. Two second half goals to Ante Deak and Dean Uroevski were enough to hold out the Institute. Gavin Hartge scored a late goal to give the visitors a chance but it was to no avail.

SOUTHERN DIVISION NYL

Fawkner Blues 1	Gippsland Falcons 1
Maio	Duckworth
Preston Lions 0	Mel Knights Academy 3
	Matkovic, Miot Mayer)
South Dandenong 1	Carlton 1
Barra	Motsiopoulos
Albury Wodonga 2	Bulleen Inter 1
Martin, Brunec	Curcija
South Melbourne 2	VIS 1
Magnacca 2	Sastre
Melbourne Knights v Bye	

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Carlton	11	10	1	0	45	6	31
VIS	11	8	0	3	31	9	24
Bulleen Inter Kings	11	7	1	3	30	20	22
Melbourne Knights	11	5	2	4	34	24	17
South Melbourne	10	5	0	5	26	12	15
Gippsland Falcons	10	4	3	3	17	21	15
South Dandenong	11	4	3	4	15	20	15
Fawkner Blues	11	3	3	5	12	24	12
Albury Wodonga	11	2	2	7	18	37	8
Melb. Knights Academy	9	2	0	7	7	16	6
Preston Lions	12	1	1	10	11	55	4

By Roy Hay

South Melbourne made a stunning comeback to defeat the Victorian Institute of Sport at Bob Jane Stadium by two goals to one on Sunday night.

The VIS was in command for long spells after taking the lead in the fifth minute. David Terek's free kick was met at the near post by Juan Sastre who out-jumped everyone to head home.

South had Anthony Magnacca and Adrian Cuzzupe back after their Brazilian adventure and they had a battle against Sastre, Terek, Denis Vucinic and Simon Storey in the middle of the field.

Tass Psonis came close for South Melbourne after a good run on the right flank, while 14 year old Spase Dilevski put a header just wide from a cross by Evan Papadopoulos of the VIS.

There were goalmouth scrambles at both ends but it was into the last ten minutes before Magnacca broke away and was brought down by Jason Dimozantos inside the penalty area. Magnacca took the kick himself and scored, then he produced a

brilliant solo run through a somewhat static defence to score the winner in 84 minutes.

Carlton dropped its first point for the season when it was held to a one-all draw by South Dandenong. Christian Barra scored for South Dandenong after 35 minutes and a real upset was looming until the 77th minute when Carlton striker Angelo Motsiopoulos equalised.

It was a tough battle throughout and South Dandenong had a player sent off but held on to show that it can match it with the top teams on its day.

Fawkner also recorded a one-all draw last Wednesday at home to Gippsland Falcons. Fawkner had to bring on its substitutes early in the game and reserve keeper Carmen Maio had to play outfield.

He got on the end of a cross to score with a header which shocked the Falcons. In heavy rain the match turned into a slog and Ross Duckworth managed to equalise for the Falcons.

The Falcons welcomed back Martin Lorenzo after a long term injury, but missed the driving force of Ben Cassar.

Melbourne Knights Academy downed Preston Lions by three goals to nil at

Connor Reserve.

The Academy got a flying start with a goal by Hrvoje Matkovic after only three minutes and Ivan Miot made it two in 22 minutes. Andre Mayer scored again just before the interval. At times in the game almost got out of control and Preston received three red cards.

Albury Wodonga beat Bulleen Inter by two goals to one. Though Bulleen was missing the spine of its team as four key players made the transition to the seniors, it began by putting heavy pressure on the home defence.

Michael Binney raised the siege with a run down and the left and he was upended in the penalty box. David Martin put the Warners in front from the spot.

After missing some good chances Albury came under pressure in the latter stages of the first half. Keeper Sam Chambers was the home hero as he continued to defy Bulleen in the second half, but in 55 minutes a mix-up in the defence let Adam Curcija in for the equaliser.

Paul Brunec scored what proved to be the winner for Albury in the 72nd minute.

DEMONS EASILY WIN THE BATTLE OF THE WEST

BLACKTOWN DEMONS 5

Brown 6, 92, Hagger 16, Bennett 80, Kwasnik 94.

PENRITH PANTHERS 0

Saturday night at Gabbie Stadium, Sydney.



MATCH STATS

BLACKTOWN: Greco, Foxe (Riches 37), Bradley, Langan, Dee, Sermanni, Hagger (Bennett 75), Brown, Lowe, Richardson (Kwasnik 83), Imaya.

PENRITH: Martin, Ackerley (Astone 35), Tehliwec, Collins, A. Driene, M. Driene (Radic 46), Casserly, Lewis, Hinton (Crampton 76), Thomas, Picken. Yellow: Lewis, Thomas, Radic (Penrith).

Referee: Jonathan Streater.



By Ben Cubby

Blacktown City hammered the Penrith Panthers 5-0 in the west Sydney derby at Gabbie Stadium on Saturday night.

The visitors had no answer to the slick passing of the Demons and were lucky to escape an even heavier defeat.

Blacktown are now back on track after a slow start to the season, while Penrith are still seeking their first win in the Super League competition.

Brilliant left-sided midfielder Damien Brown led the charge for Blacktown early on.

In the sixth minute, he pounced on a weak Chris Ackerley backpass and rounded Penrith's 'keeper Luke Martin to make

home side

The new Demons forward line of Mark Hagger and Naoki "the samurai" Imaya constantly harassed the Panthers defence and the pair combined to nab Blacktown's second after 16 minutes.

An intricate interchange of passes set up Hagger for a tap-in - his first goal for the club since his arrival from the Marconi youth team.

For a while it looked as though Blacktown would rack up a cricket score, but the tenacious young Penrith line-up managed to hold them scoreless for the next hour of play.

Blacktown had been working hard on their passing during the week, after last round's nil-all draw with Manly, and the smooth Gabbie turf allowed them demonstrate their improvement.

Sparkling play from Paul Richardson, Chris Bradley and Peter Sermanni in midfield created a number of chances that could have been better finished by the forwards.

Luke Martin - a former Demons junior - pulled off several great saves throughout the match to keep the Panthers in the hunt.

Moments after the start of the second half, Damien Brown won Blacktown a penalty and took it himself. Martin guessed rightly, though, and parried the weak effort to safety.

Imaya was a real livewire for the home side, even though he had been marked out as a danger man before the match and was closely policed.

He broke away from Garth Tehliwec in the 61st minute and chipped the ball past Martin but not the crossbar.

In the 65th, he evaded several Penrith players down the right flank and crossed to Hagger, who volleyed inches over the bar with only Martin to beat.

With the Panthers on the back paw for most of the game, Damon Langan was able to push forward from his defensive role and cover an immense amount of ground in the Demons midfield.

He set up Richardson and Imaya for a couple of low shots that were saved by Martin or cleared off the line by defenders.

it one-nil

Penrith's Allen Picken and Bob Casserly had half chances to equalise straight after the goal, but most of the momentum remained with the

The pressure finally told in the 80th minute, when Richardson rifled a powerful cross into the Penrith six-yard box.

Substitute Jason Bennett's glancing header was too hot for Martin to handle, slipping through his gloves into the net.

Brown scored his second and Blacktown's fourth in stoppage time, slotting away a rebound after Bennett's shot was only parried by the 'keeper.

17-year-old substitute Adam Kwasnik iced the cake in the 94th minute with the fifth and final goal.

He ran onto a measured through-ball and carefully picked his spot before volleying past Martin for his first goal in senior football.

Blacktown sent out a warning signal to other Super League sides with this crushing victory.

With powerful players in every position, they were simply too strong for their opponents.

A formidable defence, skilful and hard-working midfield and pacy forward line are the ingredients needed to again challenge for the title.

"This side is possibly a bit better than last year," said experienced Demons coach Brian Brown.

"The passing and movement was sensational and so was the amount of shots on goal."

"Naoki was fantastic - he's really quick. I'm also very pleased with Richardson and Sermanni. Overall, we were stronger."

Penrith were comprehensively beaten, but coach Stan Ackerley saw some promising signs in the defeat.

"There are only a couple of these lads who have played in this league before. Bob Casserly did well for us



Damien Brown

"It's a learning experience for the rest - if they make mistakes they will get punished by this sort of team."

"Our goal for the season is to finish outside the bottom four this year, and we'll do it."

"I've been at this club for a few years now and the team spirit is amazing."

In the Under-21's fixture, goals from Steve Dimovski, Con Sigilano and substitute Karim Ballout gave Penrith a good 3-0 victory over an out-of-sorts Blacktown outfit.

A single strike from Marcus Frost gave Blacktown a 1-0 win in the Under-18's encounter.

See Page 24 for grade tables.

Super League



Games at 7.00pm (1st grade), 5.00pm (21s), 3.00pm (18s) unless otherwise specified.

Saturday 5 February

Leichhardt Tigers v Eastern Suburbs, Lambert Park
St George v Blacktown City, St George Stadium
Bonnyrigg v Parramatta Eagles, Serbian Centre
Macarthur Rams v Canterbury Marrickville, Lynwood Park
Penrith Panthers v Central Coast, Andrews Road Field
Manly Warringah v Sutherland Sharks, Cromer Park : 6.00pm (1st grade), 4.00pm (21s)
Bankstown City v Fairfield, Jensen Park : 5.00pm (18s)

Sunday 6 February

Bankstown City v Fairfield, Jensen Park : 6.00pm (1st grade), 4.00pm (21s)
Manly Warringah v Sutherland Sharks, Cromer Park : 5.00pm (18s)

Catch all the latest news on football in NSW in **Super Soccer OUT 3 February!**

www.soccernsw.com.au

NSW is cool!

It's official. NSW Federation is hip with the kids! The NSW Soccer Federation has been named as a 'Top 10 Cool Site' by Netscape, the international Internet browser.

The Federation recently had a facelift on its comprehensive site which contains information on the full range of services and competitions in New South Wales and other items of interest to soccer in NSW and Australia.

It also provides up-to-date information on forthcoming games, results and tables for all major competitions.

"Not all our competitions are going at the moment," said Marketing and Communications Manager, Bonnie Mersiades, "but when they are, we provide results and tables for all 37 of them."

"We believe it's one of the most comprehensive independent sports sites around because of the large number of competitions we have. It's also possible to purchase products on line for Coerver Coaching, make an inquiry on coaching programs or schools visits and we also place a feature article from our magazine, 'Super Soccer' on it each week."

The site navigation and text were written by the NSW Federation and the site was designed by Chris Beattie.

"Chris' brief was to give us an updated image which would be attractive to young people in particular ... It's fresh, vibrant and - to borrow from Netscape - cool!" Ms Mersiades said.

You can be cool too by visiting www.soccernsw.com.au

A day in the life of a Colt

By Michael Kmet

I spent Australia Day with the Newcastle Breakers' Colts team as they travelled to St George Stadium to tackle National Youth League leaders Sydney Olympic. The Colts were buoyant after downing Olympic 5-0 the previous Friday night but were determined to demonstrate that this was no shock result.

I arrive to Breakers Stadium at 12:20pm and most of the players are seated on the bus ready for the 12:30pm departure. Coach Alex Tagaroulas arrives a few minutes later and we are set to leave for the three hour trip.

Apart from the players there are Colt's managers Peter James and Con Safouris, and trainer Gerard Carey on the bus with us. The players have obviously come well pre-

pared with newspapers, magazines, and walkmans being shared around the bus. William Pryce, brother of Breakers' skipper Shane, appeared to have taken the whole of this year's Hunter valley grape crop with him as he offers fists full of the fruit around the bus.

We stop at Ourimbah on the Central Coast around 1:30pm to pick up captain Chris Fleming. Fleming and midfielder Peter Haynes are two Colt's members that reside on the Central Coast and travel an hour to get to training and an hour to get back three or four times a week.

The trip into Sydney is an enjoyable one as I chat to Tagaroulas about football. Alex strikes me as being an intelligent student of the game and tactically very sharp. He explains his tactics against Olympic that helped the team win last Friday night and noted that he won't change his game-plan in choking possession to Olympic's ball players. He stressed that he believed that the Friday game was no fluke and that his team could score more goals against a weak Olympic defence.

We arrive to St George Stadium just after 3pm and wait for the 4:30pm kick-off. While the players would hardly remember the glory days of St George Stadium the older support staff commented on how the ground is so run down. The grandstand is dirty and falling apart, the pitch is bumpy, the place has a terrible smell, and there is fungus growing throughout the dressing sheds showers and basin. This ground is not

even fit for a National Youth league game any more. It is hard to believe that they held soccer internationals here. The only improvement is the silence of the area after the East-West Runway was scaled down.

The players walk out onto the bumpy pitch and comment that these conditions would help them in closing down Olympic's ball players.

In the background manager Peter James is yelling at a couple of team members to tuck their shirts in and take off their non-club caps.

James later explains to me that this is all part of the discipline process in preparing players for senior football. This discipline is emphasised as James again yells at the squad for sitting down in the grandstand, as he doesn't want the players getting lethargic and immobile after the trip.

James calls the players onto the pitch and in a huddle as he reminds them to stay focused for this game.

He tells them that after last Friday night's drubbing Olympic will be coming out harder so the boys will have to be ready from the first whistle.

Other manager Con Safouris is filling out the team sheet and preparing the playing strip. Tagaroulas is nervously puffing on a cigarette and cursing that the canteen is not open so he can get a coffee.

The boys go back into the shed to get changed as Tagaroulas goes through his pre-game plan.

By reading the opposition's team sheet he knows exactly where each of Olympic's players are positioned, whether they are right footed or left footed, and what are their particular strengths and weaknesses. It is evident that he has put a lot of homework into this game. Tagaroulas emphasises that the team must work hard for a result as Olympic will be fired up for this match.

He stressed that players must get behind the ball and shut down the playmakers identified on the whiteboard he has set up.

The players go out and have a vigorous warm-up lead by James and come back into the shed for a last minute "psyche-up". Chris Fleming and William Pryce are particularly vocal in revving the players up. Tagaroulas goes through some last minute instructions, as there is a mad panic for electrical tape.

Continued on page 26



Inside Soccer

Super League summary round 4



Leichhardt Tigers and Central Coast share the lead at the top of the Super League ladder - very closely followed by Canterbury Marrickville and newcomers St George, after enjoying mixed fortunes in Round 4.

Coast were held 0-0 by struggling Manly-Warringah at half time at Cromer Park, after the Dolphins' goal had led a charmed life, but it was a different story after the break.

Coasties' captain Peter Preston stole the ball from a Manly defender in the 49th minute to open the scoring, and Nathan Byrn ran onto a Shane Knight clearance from out of defence to go on and lob the Manly keeper in the 73rd. Paul Roberts made a good turn inside the area to slam home the third in the 85th, after Knight and Stuart Sontag had combined well.

The Dolphins snatched a 90th minute consolation goal when Rob Smithies arrived at the far post to nod in a smart cross from Scott McGuire.

Leichhardt Tigers had to settle for a 1-1 draw at Macarthur despite being well in control for long periods.

Chad Bishop had the Rams one up before Steve Karavatakis equalised and, though well on top, Leichhardt almost conceded a late goal from an indirect free kick inside their own penalty area for a goalkeeping infringement.

Blacktown thrashed Penrith 5-0, see Ben Cubby's match report on previous page.

Sutherland were on the wrong end of a 4-0 scoreline at Seymour Shaw Park as Bankstown came good at last. Sasho Talevski, Nabil Codmani, George Issa and substitute Zia Younan were the scorers for the Lions.

Fairfield rescued their season with a 2-0 win over Easts at Nineveh Field.

Last year's Golden Boot Matthew Borg, scored a goal in each half and Bulls' keeper Dragan Pupovac saved a second half penalty into the bargain, against a luckless and so far pointless, Eastern Suburbs, the only side in the competition yet to trouble the scorers.

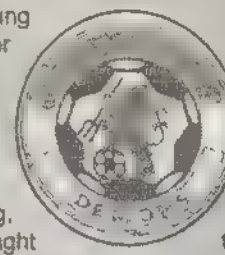
St George had a surprise win for a.I - except the St George players who again put in a strong and determined effort to come away 2-0 victors after a tough tussle.

Canterbury Marrickville bounced back to form after last week's shock 0-4 loss defeating last year's premiers, Bonnyrigg, 5-2.

Ferraro Nikas and Ilic all scored and Christofiridis scoring two for Canterbury including one in the first 40 seconds of play.

Next week's match-up between St George and Blacktown looks to be the match of the round, with two in-form and ambitious teams meeting at St George Stadium on Saturday.

Leichhardt's Steve Karavatakis still heads the top scorers' chart with five, followed by Jim Bakis of St George on four.



SUPER LEAGUE TABLES

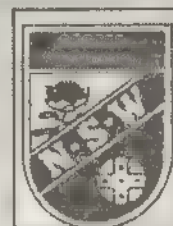
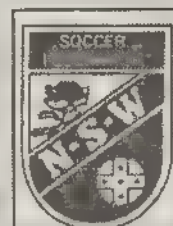
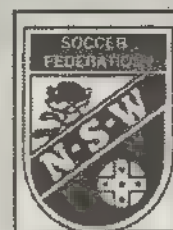
FIRST GRADE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
LEICHHARDT TIGERS	4	3	1	0	12	6	10	6
Central Coast Coasties	4	3	1	0	9	3	10	6
St George Saints	4	3	0	1	8	2	9	6
Canterbury Marrickville	4	3	0	1	11	8	9	3
Bankstown City Lions	4	2	2	0	6	1	8	5
Blacktown City Demons	4	2	1	1	7	2	7	5
Sutherland Sharks	4	2	0	2	6	11	6	-5
Parramatta Eagles	4	1	2	1	7	4	5	3

Macarthur Rams	4	1	2	1	4	3	5	1
Fairfield Bulls	4	1	0	3	5	8	3	-3
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	4	1	0	3	5	10	3	-5
Manly Warringah Dolphins	4	0	2	2	4	8	2	-4
Penrith Panthers	4	0	1	3	2	14	1	-12
Eastern Suburbs	4	0	0	4	1	7	0	-6

U 21S	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
PENRITH PANTHERS	4	3	0	1	12	8	9	4
Parramatta Eagles	4	3	0	1	9	6	9	3
Central Coast Coasties	4	3	0	1	5	3	9	2
Fairfield Bulls	4	2	1	1	8	5	7	3
Leichhardt Tigers	4	2	1	1	9	7	7	2
Blacktown City Demons	4	2	1	1	4	5	7	-1
Canterbury Marrickville	4	2	0	2	10	10	6	0
Macarthur Rams	4	2	0	2	4	6	6	-2
Sutherland Sharks	4	1	2	1	6	8	5	-2
St George Saints	4	1	1	2	4	3	4	1
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	4	1	1	2	5	7	4	-2
Eastern Suburbs	4	0	3	1	6	7	3	-1
Manly Warringah Dolphins	4	1	0	3	6	8	3	-2
Bankstown City Lions	4	0	0	4	1	6	0	-5

U 18S	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	GD
BLACKTOWN DEMONS	4	4	0	0	9	2	12	7
Parramatta Eagles	4	3	1	0	12	1	10	11
Leichhardt Tigers	4	3	1	0	7	3	10	4
Fairfield Bulls	4	3	0	1	9	5	9	4
Macarthur Rams	4	2	2	0	5	2	8	3
Bonnyrigg White Eagles	4	1	1	2	5	4	4	1
Central Coast Coasties	4	1	1	2	7	9	4	-2
Eastern Suburbs	4	1	1	2	5	9	4	-4
Bankstown City Lions	4	1	1	2	2	7	4	-5
Manly Warringah Dolphins	4	1	0	3	5	6	3	-1
Penrith Panthers	4	0	3	1	3	4	3	-1
St George Saints	4	1	0	3	4	15	3	-11
Canterbury Marrickville	4	0	2	2	4	7	2	-3

	1st	U21	U18
Macarthur Rams v Leichhardt Tigers	1-1	2-1	0-0
Blacktown City Demons v Penrith Panthers	5-0	0-3	1-0
Manly Warringah Dolphins v Central Coast Coasties	1-3	1-2	2-3
Sutherland Sharks v Bankstown City Lions	0-4	1-0	0-0
Fairfield Bulls v Eastern Suburbs	2-0	2-2	3-0
Parramatta Eagles v St George Saints	0-2	0-3	7-0
Canterbury Marrickville v Bonnyrigg White Eagles	5-2	3-1	1-1



MELBOURNE SOCCER ON THE MOVE

By Mark Fisher

Pick up any community newspaper throughout suburban Melbourne, and you will probably find a bit of space devoted to the plethora of state league clubs stretching across this city of three and a half million people.

It goes without saying that in line with the rest of the nation, general interest in the world game seems to be on the rise throughout the state of Victoria as well.

You need not be an expert in sports demography to know Melbourne's west is a thriving soccer belt, with its growing array of clubs, some traditional and some not-so.

These clubs dot the landscape from Melton, a satellite town in the north-west, right down to Bell Park within the city of Geelong, which boasts as a former player one Gary Ablett (the AFL legend.)

On the other side of the city, there are divisional state league clubs extending from hilly Doncaster in the north-east

(which also serves as one of many feeder clubs for Carlton), down to the southern extremities of the Mornington Peninsula.

If soccer's the game you play, you cannot go far wrong wherever you reside within the Victorian capital.

As hard evidence that the sport is 'on the move' south of the Murray, a number of new grounds have sprung up within the space of only a few years. The arrival of the Melbourne Raiders (formerly Thomastown) at Epping, not to mention the construction of its splendid facilities and excellent playing surface, is no exception to the notion that Victorian soccer possesses tremendous potential despite the expected stiff competition from Australian Rules football.

The growth is not restricted to clubs alone. Last year the state's football association - the Victorian Soccer Federation - turned a modest operating profit for the first time in years.

And it is widely known that grassroots participation in suburban Melbourne has been increasing at such a pace that

well-known spokespeople of that 'other' football have stressed that local soccer clubs pose a serious threat to their own code's long-term future.

Speaking of futures, you can't ignore the fact that food and beverage sales form one of four important sources of revenue for Victorian clubs (the other three of course being sponsorship, gaming (where applicable) and gates.

With the move by the VSF this season to re-compose State League Division 2 and Division 3 clubs into their own geographical zones, thereby placing greater emphasis on local derbies, there is every chance club turnover will increase and travel costs will be reduced thanks to this particular restructure.

Within the Victorian Premier League, a positive mood exists towards the formation of a National Soccer League second

division.

With promotion into the elite Australian competition a real possibility, incentive may soon exist for clubs to attract more significant sponsorship and to heighten their profile and standing in the game.

Green Gully, Bulleen, Heidelberg and the Melbourne Raiders are all seen as potential candidates for any proposed second tier of the NSL.

Heidelberg in particular has already announced a four million

dollar upgrade to its facilities at Olympic Village, in order for it to try and meet criteria for the second division by October 2000.

For more information about the Victorian Soccer Federation and its competitions, visit the VSF's web site at <http://www.soccervictoria.org.au>

Green Gully, Bulleen, Heidelberg and Melbourne Raiders are all seen as potential candidates for any proposed second tier of the NSL.



FIRST ROUND VPL PREVIEW

The Victorian Soccer Federation has, along with its northern counterpart the New South Wales Soccer Federation, shifted its fixtures into summer and autumn to allow some of its top flight to prepare for entry into Soccer Australia's proposed second division competition.

This Premier League season, now featuring a re-vamped 12 team format (down from the fourteen teams that took part in 1999), will be sure to test the playing strengths of a number of clubs.

Of some relevance to this statement is that plenty of NSL-experienced players are about to ply their trade within Victorian Premier League clubs, bringing with them experiences that will hopefully put them in good stead for the next five months.

Ex-Carlton wingback David Grbac, once a regular first-teamer under Eddie Krncevic, and David Della Rocca will soon line up with their new club the Melbourne Raiders.

Joining them at Epping Stadium is central midfielder Lance Plunkett and sweeper Zlatko Maglic, who themselves were cut from the Knights senior squad about ten weeks ago.

Many of the league's regular performers of 1999 have now a new club to call home.

Highly-rated keeper Chris Vella has left Green Gully in order to offer his services to the reinforced Raiders squad. Goal scoring stalwart Warren Spink made a cross-town move of his own, to Bulleen,

after having enjoyed a relatively successful stint with the Preston Lions.

And Heidelberg has added to its playing stocks by signing ex-Sunshine Georgies duo Alfonso Opazo and Cesar Hermosilla.

Underpinning the on-park playing strengths are some experienced and highly-credentialled man managers. Ian

Dobson returns as Gully's premiership winning coach; a no-nonsense campaigner whose CV boasts NSL success with the Melbourne Knights.

Not to be outdone, St Albans Saints have scored a coup by acquiring ex-South Melbourne great Micky Peterson as their coach for the season ahead.

Bulleen Zebras have also upped the ante by appointing former Soccerroo Alan Davidson for this year.

Port Melbourne Sharks, disappointing towards the end of last season, will have home favourite Peter Tsiaklis continuing his good work at the helm of this fairly well supported club.

It is hoped that overall attendances will pick up once again this year, especially with the billing of a larger number of traditional derbies. It should be an intriguing season to look forward to.

The first taste of weekend action begins this Friday night, when Oakleigh takes on rivals Heidelberg United. On Saturday 5 February, Altona Magic will battle it out with St Albans Saints at Paisley Park. On Sunday 6th February, champions Green Gully host Bulleen, and on Monday night Port Melbourne will entertain Bentleigh.



Tasmanian Lance Plunkett of the Raiders

VICTORIAN PREMIER LEAGUE



ROUND 1 FIXTURES

Friday 4 February

Oakleigh v Heidelberg United

Kickoff: 8.15pm at Jack Edwards Reserve

Saturday 5 February

Altona Magic v St Albans Saints

Kickoff: 6pm at Paisley Park (on Altona East's ground)

Sunday 6 February

Green Gully Cavaliers v Bulleen Inter Zebras

Kickoff: 7pm at Green Gully Reserve

Fawkner Blues v Altona East Phoenix

Kickoff: 6pm at C.B. Smith Reserve, Fawkner

Preston Lions v Melbourne Raiders

Kickoff: 6pm at Goodyear Stadium, Reservoir

Monday 7 February

Port Melbourne Sharks v Bentleigh Greens

Kickoff: 8.15pm at S.S. Anderson Reserve, Port Melbourne

VPL SIDES AT A GLANCE

Altona East Phoenix

GROUND: Paisley Park
BEST PERFORMANCES: Finished ninth in 1999.
COACH: Peter Ollerton
PLAYER TO WATCH: Ross Antoniadis, the sweeper who stepped up a notch last season to ensure Altona East stayed alive in the VPL.

Altona Magic

GROUND: Paisley Park
BEST PERFORMANCES: Won the VPL in 1995, 1996 and 1997
COACH: Zoran Trajceviski
PLAYER TO WATCH: Ace Vasilevski, a former U-21 midfielder for Yugoslavia, who is one of at least three foreign imports for the Magic.

Bentleigh Greens

GROUND: Kingston Heath Complex, Cheltenham
BEST PERFORMANCES: Finished fourth in 1997.
COACH: Harry Chalkitis
PLAYER TO WATCH: Tom Karapatsos, generally a real trier for the Greens.

Bulleen Inter Zebras

GROUND: The Veneto Club, Bulleen
BEST PERFORMANCES: Won the VPL in 1993 and 1998.
COACH: Alan Davidson
PLAYER TO WATCH: Ex-Socceroo

veteran Warren Spink, proving age is no barrier by bagging a tally of 14 goals last season.

Fawkner Blues

GROUND: C.B. Smith Reserve, Fawkner
BEST PERFORMANCES: Were runners-up in the 1993 VPL season.
COACH: Ken Moore
PLAYER TO WATCH: Midfielder Martin Collins, who attracted the interest of both the Knights and Gippsland during the NSL pre-season.

Green Gully Cavaliers

GROUND: Green Gully Reserve, Keilor Downs
BEST PERFORMANCES: VPL winners 1999.
COACH: Ian Dobson
PLAYER TO WATCH: George Sygros the stocky midfielder who terrorized opposition defences with his strength and surprising workrate. Contributed four goals last season.

Heidelberg United

GROUND: Olympic Village, Heidelberg.
BEST PERFORMANCES: Runners-up in 1996.
COACH: Jim Pyrgolios
PLAYER TO WATCH: Tony Ouliaris, the tall ex-Carlton defender is expected to make an impact at his newly promoted club.

Melbourne Raiders

GROUND: Epping Soccer Stadium
BEST PERFORMANCES: Finished eighth in 1999.
COACH: Chris Taylor
PLAYER TO WATCH: Chris Vella, one of the in-form custodians of the competition.

Oakleigh

GROUND: Jack Edwards Reserve
BEST PERFORMANCES: Won promotion into the VPL at the end of the 1999 State League Division 1 season.
COACH: Akis Algiozidis
PLAYER TO WATCH: Bill Tsiakos, a promising defender formerly with Port Melbourne.

Port Melbourne Sharks

GROUND: S.S. Anderson Reserve, Port Melbourne
BEST PERFORMANCES: Were runners-up in 1999.
COACH: Peter Tsolakis
PLAYER TO WATCH: Nicky Tsaltas, who will have to get used to scoring goals without any assistance from Peter Kakos (now with the Gippsland Falcons).

Preston Lions

GROUND: Goodyear Stadium, Reservoir
BEST PERFORMANCES: Won the



Bulleen Inter Zebras' Socceroo Warren Spink is one to look out for. He is coached by another ex-Socceroo, Alan Davidson.

VPL in 1994.

COACH: Dragan Blazeviski
PLAYER TO WATCH: Daniel Malina, a young midfielder possessing plenty of pace.

St Albans Saints

GROUND: Churchill Reserve, St Albans
BEST PERFORMANCES: Were runners-up in 1998.
COACH: Mick Peterson
PLAYER TO WATCH: Ivan Zilic, largely an unknown quantity but Inside Soccer is told he could be special.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A COLT CONTINUED



Continued from page 24

The Colts attack early and almost score in the first minute. However nine minutes later there is joy on the bench as Pryce slots away a free kick. Ten minutes later they stretch their lead to 2-0 as Lee Davelaar coolly puts away a goal. The score line prompts the Olympic coach to send his substitutes on a warm-up. James sends the Breakers' substitutes out to warm up as well.

There is a mad rush on the bench as over-age player Josh Ferguson has to come off with an ankle injury. He is one of only two over-age players in today's team. Ryan Murray replaces Ferguson.

There is talk on the bench of another 5-0 drubbing but Safouris comments that it's early days yet.

Safouris' ominous warning comes true as Olympic start to dominate and hit a goal back through a thirty-five yard screamer by Damian Pisano. However, the Breakers go into half time with a two goal advantage when Peter Haynes scores in the 45th minute.

The team comes into the shed buzzing. They can feel another astonishing victory. Tagaroulis has to settle the boys down and remind them that the job is

only half done. He then reinforced their roles and the tactics that would win them the game.

The boys almost sprint out the sheds ready for the second half.

This high is short lived as the Breakers concede an own goal two minutes into the half. The Breakers' opportunity comes not long after when Olympic player Hussein Jomma is sent-off for abusing the referee.

However, a ten-man Olympic come at Newcastle stronger and equalise with twenty minutes to go. The Breakers have let go a two-goal lead.

As I sat on the bench I thought that this young team would not be experienced enough to come back from this situation. It takes a team of enormous character not to lose from this here, and given the ages of these players I thought that they could not win from this predicament.

The odds were surely stacked against them.

However, the players found something in themselves to snatch an improbable 4-3 victory when Peter Sullini smashed the ball into the net with only minutes to go.

Peter James later described the team as a "family" and it is only through

the bonding of this family that they were able to come back from such a game.

This young team has scored nine goals against the competition leaders in the last two games, when they had only conceded twelve in all the games before that.

There are obvious scenes of mayhem after the game as the players and officials embrace and burst out into victory song.

Alex Tagaroulis was ecstatic with the efforts of his boys after the game.

"Football is all about taking the good with the bad", Tagaroulis said. "I'm happy for the boys in that they must have been through a few down during that game, but they kept coming back. I'll like to think that they were learning and I think we were seeing the knowledge in progress."

"As long as they keep working and sticking to their guns and the game plan, then they can get back the advantage and win the game... it appears that they are stepping up to the next level faster than we have all anticipated."

We head back for what will be a short journey home and take a well-deserved dinner break at McDonalds.

Tagaroulis hands each player five dollars as they all rush to the counter. This

gives me time to sit down and chat with captain Chris Fleming whose leadership and composure at the back beguiles his young age.

Fleming is also well spoken and has quickly mastered the art of talking to the media.

"It's good to get that result away from home", Fleming tells me. "Nine goals in two games against the competition leaders is not bad. As a Colts team you are happy to get a result against anyone but the last two victories have been an extra bonus."

"We have learnt a lot under Alex. He gives us extra confidence to keep the ball, particularly to the younger boys."

"He has gotten us away from the individual aspects and steered us to the traditional Newcastle work hard ethic. He is keen for us to get results."

As I doze off to sleep on the bus ride home I am certain that Newcastle has a tremendous bunch of young players coming through their ranks.

Not only have they the ability to do well in football, but they also have the character and personal skills to be well respected and liked in soccer.

NATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE - ROUND TWENTY

ADELAIDE FORCE v BRISBANE STRIKERS

1	Vilson Knezevic	1	Clint Bolton
2	Ivan Zelic	2	Glenn Gwynne
3	Alex Tobin	3	Shane Stefanutto
4	Carlo Talladira	4	Andrew Davidson
5	Damian Mori	5	Matthew Belli
6	Carl Veart	6	Brad Ditton
7	Nick Sabljak	7	Shane Smeltz
8	Aurelio Vidmar	8	David Pilic
9	Nathan Day	9	Paul Foster
10	John Fusco	10	Wayne Srhoj
11	Michael Cartwright	11	Greg Di Losa
12	Louis Brain	12	Pete Dwyer
13	Matthew Kemp	13	Stuart McClaren
14	Angelo Costanzo	14	Jade North
15	Bradley Hassell	15	Leo Langone
16	Dong Ki Kim	16	Peter Grierson
17	Attilio Hornjik	17	Jeromy Harris
18	Jonathan Lihou	18	Nick Meredith
19		19	Wade Baldwin
20		20	Daniel Duke

Venue: Hindmarsh Stadium - Friday 4 February 2000 8.00PM
 Head to Head: Played 18 Force wins: 9 Strikers wins: 4 Draws 5
 Last Week: Force 2-2 home draw with Stallions
 Strikers 3-1 home win Kingz

FOOTBALL KINGZ v SYDNEY UNITED

1	Michael Utting	1	John Crawley
2	Che Bunce	2	Ray Younis
3	Riki Van Stooden	3	Mark Racker
4	Fabio Macollino	4	Velimir Kupresak
5	Jonathon Perry	5	Eddie Bosnar
6	Marcus Stergiopoulos	6	Vince Savocca
7	Wynton Rufer	7	Mirko Jurilj
8	Chris Jackson	8	Nahuel Arrarte
9	Fred de Jong	9	Mario Jermen
10	Dino Mennillo	10	Ante Moric
11	Robbie Middleby	11	Tom Pondeljak
12	Harry Ngata	12	Tom Maric
13	Levent Osman	13	Matthew Zec
14	Batrum Suri	14	Kaln Rastall
15	Ivan Vicolich	15	Aytec Genc
16	Lee Jones	16	Joe Moric
17	Maciel Edmilson	17	Nick Bosevski
18	Stuart Riddle	18	Steve Bozinovski
19	Leigh Kenyon	19	Greg Saric
20	Jason Batty	20	Steve Tollos
21	David Moya	21	Zvonko Uslebrka
22	Aaron Silva	22	Colin Luff
23	Simon Eaddy	23	Terry Palapanis
		24	Andy Rakic
		25	Ante Deak
		30	Brett Hughes

Venue: North Harbour Stadium - Friday 4 February 2000 7.30PM
 Head to Head: Played 1 Kingz wins: 0 United wins: 1 Draws 0
 Last Week: Kingz 3-1 away loss to Strikers
 United 1-1 home draw with Knights

LIVE FRIDAY NIGHT 5.30 PM
C7 SPORT CHANNEL 12

GIPPSLAND FALCONS v CARLTON

1	Bojo Jevdjovic	1	Dean Anastasiadis
2	Dean Fak	2	Dave McPherson
3	Manny Gotis	3	Craig Deans
4	Mehmed Durakovic	4	Simon Colosimo
5	Jeff Hopkins	5	Sean Douglas
6	Brian MacNichol	6	Andrew Marth
7	Andy Vargas	7	Stuart Slater
8	Clayton Bell	8	Mark Atkinson
9	Robbie Puca	9	Alex Moreira
10	Sandy Robertson	10	Lubo Lapsansky
11	John Hutchinson	11	Archie Thompson
12	Peter Kakos	12	Mike Conroy
13	Adrian Savage	13	Steve Martin
14	Doug Marcina	14	John Markovski
15	Jonathon Buhuglar	15	Con Anthonopoulos
16	Juan Nilo	16	David Terminello
17	Will Hastie	17	Joe Tricarico
18	Michael Katz	18	David Della Rocca
19	Ivan Mandic	19	Serdar Pir
20	Simon Miotto	20	Adrian Cagalj
		21	Andrew Packer
		22	Angelo Moutsopoulos
		23	Colin Azzopardi
		24	Joshua Kennedy

Venue: Falcons Stadium - Saturday 5 February 2000 7.00PM
 Head to Head: Played 5 Falcons: 1 Carlton wins: 2 Draws 2
 Last week: Falcons 1-1 away draw with Cosmos
 Carlton 0-1 home loss to Olympic

SYDNEY OLYMPIC v CANBERRA COSMOS

1	Jim Kourtis	1	David Milin
2	Scott Thomas	2	Toplica Popovich
3	Chris Zoricich	3	Danny Burt
4	Peter Tsekenis	4	Nicholas Purdue
5	Scott Baillie	5	Jason Polak
6	Ante Juric	6	David Winnie
7	Zlatko Arambasic	7	Daniel Watkins
8	Marcus Phillips	8	Alex Castro
9	Pablo Cardozo	9	Michael Musitano
10	Brett Emerton	10	David Arranz
11	Chris Kalantzis	11	Brian Hamilton
12	Sebastian Sinozic	12	
13		13	
14	Gabriel Mendez	14	Harry James
15	Lindsay Wilson	15	Glen Kolpak
16	Paul Kohler	16	Ilija Prenzovski
17	John Kyriazopoulos	17	Robbie Hooker
18	Nick Carle	18	Nikola Mrdja
19	George Bouhoutsos	19	Geoff Howarth
20	Lee Miot	20	Grant Barlow
21	Pete Zorbas	21	Scott Conlon
22	Dylan Macallister	22	Elliot Zwangobani
23	Norman Tome	23	
24	Hussein Jomaa	24	PJ Roberts
25	Adam Ciantar	25	Ivo De Jesus
26	John Karoubas		

Venue: Belmore Sports Ground - Sunday 6 February 2000 6.30PM
 Head to Head: Played 11 Olympic: 8 Cosmos wins: 1 Draws 2
 Last week: Olympic 0-1 away win over Carlton
 Cosmos 1-1 home draw with Falcons

WOLLONGONG WOLVES v NEWCASTLE BREAKERS

1	Leslie Pogliacomli	1	Bob Catlin
2	George Souris	2	Shane Pryce
3	Alvin Ceccoli	3	Andrew Roberts
4	Robert Stanton	4	Adam Sanderson
5	David Cervinski	5	Todd McManus
6	Matthew Horsley	6	Glenn Sprod
7	Paul Reid	7	Travis Dodd
8	Anthony Surjan	8	Mark Wilson
9	Sasho Dimoski	9	Chris Tancheski
10	Stuart Young	10	John Buonavoglia
11	Scott Chipperfield	11	Luke Tomich
12	Neil Harlock	12	Robert Anglevski
13	Noel Spencer	13	Brad Wiczorek
14	Saso Petrovski	14	Greg Owens
15	David Huxley	15	Joshua Ferguson
16	Peter Lahanas	16	Vasko Trpceviski
17	Esala Masi	17	Paul Wheeler
18	Chad Bishop	18	Andrew Harper
19	Paul Dimech	19	Chad Mansley
20	Daniel Beritrame	20	Bradley Swancott
21	Christian Zelvis	21	Peter Juchniewicz
		22	Glen Moore
		23	Damien Smith
		30	Jason Kos

Venue: Brandon Park - Sunday 6 February 2000 6.30PM
 Head to Head: Played 16 Wolves wins: 6 Breakers wins: 3 Draws 7
 Last week: Wolves 2-1 away loss to Glory
 Breakers 2-0 away loss to South Melbourne

MELBOURNE KNIGHTS v PARRAMATTA POWER

2	Joey Rayher	1	Andrew Crews
3	Ivan Jolic	2	David Barrett
4	Ante Kovacevic	3	Michael Santalab
5	Jason Vukadin	4	Steve Eagleton
6	John Didulica	5	Richard Plesa
7	Mark Silic	6	Joe Vrkic
8	Dragi Nastevski	7	Jacob Burns
9	Ivan Kelic	8	Walter Ardene
10	Paul Urlovic	9	Mile Sterjovski
11	Mijo Trupkovic	10	Joel Griffiths
12	Murtala Toyin Abbas	11	Steve Berry
13	Lance Plunkett	12	Stephen Laybutt
14	Paul Magdic	13	Milan Blagojevic
15	Ransford Banini	14	John Angelucci
16	Alex Kriztoglou	15	Danny Townsend
17	Brandon Vassalo	16	Mark Byrnes
18	Roddy Vargas	17	Danny Kukucka
19	Zlatko Maglic	18	Lachlan Campbell
20	Martin John	19	Matt Thompson
21	Zeljko Susa	20	Barney Smith
22	Steven Tillinger	21	Ahmid Elrich
23	Michael Reda	22	John Gibson
24	Hrvoje Matkovic	23	Peter Bennett
25	Adrian Cervinski	28	
26	Marko Prskalo	29	
		30	Mike Gibson

Venue: Knights Stadium - Sunday 6 February 2000 6.00PM
 Head to Head: Played 1 Knights wins: 0 Power wins: 0 Draws 1
 Last Week: Knights 1-1 away draw with Sydney United
 Power 4-3 home win over Spirit

LIVE FRIDAY 4 FEBRUARY 7.30
C7 SPORT CHANNEL 13

**NORTHERN SPIRIT V
 SOUTH MELBOURNE**



SPIRIT

- 1 John Perosh
- 2 Robert Enes
- 3 Matthew Langdon
- 4 Matthew Bingley (below)
- 5 Mark Rudan
- 6 Luke Casserley
- 7 Robbie Slater
- 8 Tony Perinich
- 9 David Seal
- 11 Troy Cranney
- 12 Simon Catanzaro
- 13 Philip Moss
- 14 Shane Lyons
- 15 Anthony Faria
- 17 Paul Bilokapic
- 18 Paul Wearne
- 19 Graham Arnold
- 20 Jess Van Stratten
- 21 Michael Cunico
- 22 Paul Henderson
- 23 Adam Snyder
- 24 Elvis Olic
- 25 Ryan Griffiths
- 26 Jack Sobczyk
- 27 Adam Griffiths
- 28 Abbas Saad
- 29 Ian Crook
- 30 Sean Cranney

SOUTH

- 1 Milan Udvaracz
- 2 Steve Iosifidis
- 3 Fausto de Amicis
- 4 Nick Orlic
- 5 Con Blatsis
- 6 David Clarkson
- 7 Steve Panopoulos
- 8 Vaughan Coveny
- 9 Paul Trimboli
- 10 Michael Curcija
- 11 John Anastasiadis
- 12 Richie Alagich
- 13 Adrian Cuzzupe
- 14 Anthony Magnacca
- 15 Goran Lozanovski
- 16 George Goutzoulis
- 17 Jim Tsekini
- 18 Robert Liparoti
- 19 Tasos Psonis
- 20 Chris Jones
- 21
- 22 Mustafa Mustafa



Venue: North Sydney Oval
Friday 4 February 7.30PM
Head-to-Head: 3
Spirit: 1
Souths: 2
Draws: 0
Last Week: Spirit 4-3 away loss to Power
 Souths 2-0 home win over Breakers



LIVE SUNDAY 6 FEBRUARY 6.00
C7 SPORT CHANNEL 12

**MARCONI STALLIONS
 V PERTH GLORY**



STALLIONS

- 1 Michael Turnbull
- 2 Chad Gibson
- 3 Mark Babic
- 4
- 5 Dominic Longo
- 6 Pan-Keum Kim
- 7 Christian Care
- 8 Darren McDonald (below)
- 9 Zeljko Babic
- 10 Brad Maloney
- 11 Mike Smith
- 12
- 13 Danny Invincible
- 14 Buddy Farah
- 15 Pierluigi di Gia
- 16
- 17 Francis Awaritefe
- 18 Harry Karl
- 19 Brendan Ranaud
- 20 David Aceski
- 21 Paolo Marchesini
- 22 Kris Trajanovski
- 23 Vlado Zoric
- 24 Josala Junior Sauturaga
- 25
- 26 Daniel Severino

GLORY

- 1 Tom Tomich
- 2 Robert Trajkovski
- 3 Jamie Harnwell
- 4
- 5 Vinko Buljubasic
- 6 Gareth Naven
- 7 Scott Miller
- 8 Troy Halpin
- 9 Alistair Edwards
- 10 Bobby Despotoski
- 11 Kasey Wehrman
- 12 Peter Buljan
- 13 James Afkos
- 14 Dion Valle
- 15 Edgar Junior
- 16 Con Boutsianis
- 17 Vas Kalogeracos
- 18 Hamilton Thorp
- 19 John Carbone
- 20 Tony Franken
- 21 Ivan Ergic
- 22 Ljubo Milicevic
- 23 Jason Petkovic
- 24 Aaron Cole
- 25 Gary Faria



Venue: Marconi Stadium
Sunday 6 February 6.00PM
Head to Head: 9
Stallions: 0
Glory: 5
Draws: 4
Last Week: Stallions 2-2 away draw with Force
 Glory 2-1 home win over Wolves



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Football Kingz v Sydney United Friday night.
Northern Spirit v South Melbourne Friday night.
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